

Sunbeam Fostering Agency

Sunbeam Fostering Agency Limited
383 Broad Lane, Coventry CV5 7AX

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned fostering agency was registered in March 2011. It is one of three registrations and part of the Sunbeam Fostering Group. The registered branch is in Coventry, and an office in Nottingham supports foster carers living in the north. The agency offers a range of mainstream fostering placements and has recently started to offer therapeutic placements.

There are currently 52 approved fostering households and 67 children and young people living in foster homes.

Inspection dates: 26 to 30 June 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 30 November 2015

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Children and young people live with carers who are well trained and are skilled to meet their individual needs.
- Children and young people make good progress with their emotional and behavioural difficulties because their carers provide high-quality, nurturing support to them.
- Children make good progress in relation to their health and education through a wealth of new experiences that are provided by their foster families.
- Children and young people feel safe and secure because their foster carers are available to them, provide stability and routine, and know what to do if their behaviour becomes unsafe or risky.
- Children and young people feel part of their foster families and the community where they live.
- Children and carers receive practical and therapeutic support from the agency and enjoy regular social occasions to relax, enjoy and celebrate alongside staff and managers.
- Children and young people's views are listened to and acted on by agency leaders and managers.
- Children and young people benefit because supervising social workers and managers in the agency work well with other professionals.
- Leaders and managers are visible to staff, carers and children and have a reputation for being child-centred.
- There is a full staff team who are energetic and skilled.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Children and young people do not see or keep written records that would give them a clear sense of their plans and the progress that they make.
- Children rarely get child-friendly information about the foster home that they are going to before they arrive.
- Carers do not get a clear written summary about any allegations that have been made about them once investigations are complete.
- The agency and panel do not work together effectively enough to ensure that new carers are approved robustly.
- Managers do not monitor, review and analyse the service clearly enough to identify and address some weaknesses in the service.

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure that, unless an emergency placement makes it impossible, children are given information about the foster carer before arrival, and any information (including where appropriate, photographic information) they need or reasonably request about the placement, in a format appropriate to their age and understanding. (NMS 11.3)
- Ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. (NMS 26.6) This is with particular reference to returning information about children to them and providing them with child-friendly recorded evidence of any and all of their progress at every opportunity.
- Ensure that a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a particular member of the fostering household, or staff member, including details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a record of any action taken and the decisions reached, is kept on the person's confidential file. A copy is provided to the person as soon as the investigation is concluded. The information is retained on the confidential file, even after someone leaves the organisation, until the person reaches normal retirement age, or for ten years if this is longer. (NMS 22.7)
- Ensure that as soon as possible after an investigation into a foster carer is concluded, their approval as suitable to foster is reviewed. (NMS 22.8) This is with particular regard to ensuring that review panel meetings do not consider carers ongoing suitability until investigations are actually complete and full information is available.
- Ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (NMS 25.2) This is with specific reference to conducting thorough analysis of agency activity, including clear analysis of deficits, gaps and difficulties.
- Ensure that written reports on a person's suitability to be approved as a foster carer set out clearly all the information that the fostering panel and decision maker need in order to make an objective approval decision. The reports are prepared, signed and dated by the social worker who assessed the prospective foster carer and countersigned and dated by the fostering team manager or a team manager of another of the provider's fostering teams. (NMS 13.7) This is with particular reference to ensuring that the agency and assessors work together effectively so that all necessary checks are completed, analysed and used to inform assessments before they are brought to panel.
- Ensure that each person on the central list is given the opportunity of attending an annual joint training day with the fostering service's fostering staff (NMS 23.10). This is with particular respect to developing the panel's quality assurance function and helping assessors and staff to work together more effectively.

- Ensure that the written policy on payments is clear on payment of allowances and any fees during a break in placement or should the household be subject to an allegation. (NMS 28.5)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people make good progress with their emotional and behavioural difficulties because their carers provide high-quality and nurturing support. One child told the inspector, 'They are very kind and they listen to me when I feel worried about something.' A teenage mother said, 'My carer supported me with looking after my baby daughter when I have needed it.' An eight-year-old said, 'They help me with my behaviour especially, a lot.' Carers understand the needs of children and young people that are matched with them. They make good relationships with them and meet their individual needs well. A child's local authority social worker said, 'The carers for my children are emotionally attached to them and this shows in the way they care and what they are prepared to do.'

Children and young people make good progress in relation to their development, health and education. They are catching up because carers provide them with good routines, quality time and a wealth of new experiences. For example, carers source and secure appropriate educational placements for children. Carers help children and young people with reading, writing and problem-solving. Carers also introduce healthy meal, and sleep and hygiene routines. One child said, '[Carer] has made me better at my writing and numbers; I talk to her about everything; I wouldn't like anything to change – we have been living with her for over a year.' A teenage asylum-seeking young person said, 'I have liked everything in my foster carers – I can pray in this house and my room is really nice; their food is really good; they gave me a book to translate [dictionary] so I have got progress from the book. Everything is getting well.' Another child said, 'We're going on holiday soon and I'm excited.' Overall, children and young people are being prepared for a better future.

Children and young people feel part of their foster families and the community where they live. They are also placed with their brothers and sisters where this is right for them all. One child said, 'I have made lots of friends on my street; [carer] helps me learn how to cook and reads at night time; I don't fight any more and she tells my sister off for teasing me. I love living with [carer], actually, I prefer it here.' Another child said, '[Carer] helps me with problems at school if I fall out with my friends and she takes us to places we wouldn't even imagine.' Overall, the needs of all children and young people are met, including those placed outside their home authority.

Children and young people live with well-trained carers who promote their progress. New carers are welcomed and prepared well for the fostering task so that they provide positive outcomes for children and young people from the outset. Carers enjoy regular opportunities to meet together and to

undertake good-quality training. For example, carers are trained in therapeutic care practice, attachment theory and positive behaviour management.

Carers enjoy extensive support, advice and input from their supervising social workers and from the agency's support workers. For example, supervising social workers inform, advise and support carers when the children and young people are subjects of court proceedings about their present and future care plans. This enables carers to empathise, reassure and help children and young people who may feel confused and sad. One supervising social worker said, 'I say to carers, "Let's talk and ventilate." Carers sometimes shout and cry but I empower them and encourage them to upskill through training.' Overall, good training and support enable carers to provide children with good-quality individualised care.

Children, young people and carers receive good practical and therapeutic support from the agency and enjoy regular social occasions to relax and celebrate alongside staff and managers. The agency's support workers provide immense individualised support to children, young people and carers in complex situations. Staff and managers also put on award ceremonies, parties and fun days in the school holidays. These events are well attended and appreciated. Children and young people receive a helpful guide about being in foster care. The guide is presented in various languages and adapted for different age ranges, so that all children and young people, including children and young people whose understanding of written English is limited, can understand it. Staff also provide each child and young person with a memory box for collecting memorabilia about their time in foster care. However, children and young people do not often get child-friendly information about the foster home that they are going to before they arrive there. In addition, children and young people rarely see or keep records that are kept about their plans and progress. These two shortfalls are minor missed opportunities to keep children and young people at the centre of what is happening to them.

**How well children and young people are helped and protected:
good**

Children and young people feel safe and secure because foster carers make themselves available, and provide stability and routine. Carers and agency staff ensure that information about children and young people is carefully reviewed at the beginning of each placement in order to assess and minimise risks that relate to children and young people's individual behaviour and experience. Supervising social workers ensure that carers carefully supervise children by adopting safe routines around dressing, bathing, medicines and tools. These practices promote children and young people's safety.

Carers express confidence about what to do concerning all areas of safeguarding, including child protection, dealing with allegations,

complaints, children going missing, bullying, cyber bullying and disclosures. Staff train carers about the dangers that young people face when going missing, such as radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and gang culture. Staff also share the agency's clear policies and procedures on these matters and provide useful materials for carers to use with children and young people. Staff also share with carers any lessons that arise from local authority serious case reviews. This input from the agency means that carers know what to look out for and provide children and young people with good help, advice and guidance as part of everyday living. For example, carers work together closely with teachers, police and social workers in order to help a young person who may be being radicalised. They are also working with children who bully, and are subject to, online bullying.

The agency provides good support to carers while any allegations against them are being investigated. However, some carers do not receive a clear written summary of the allegation, investigation and outcome as soon as it is finished.

Carers manage children's behaviour well. The clear and consistent boundaries that they provide contribute to a feeling of well-being and security for children and young people. One 10-year-old said, 'I feel safe and I get help when I need it.' A 14-year-old asylum-seeking young person said, 'I feel safe and secure here – my needs are met – they are always available when I need help and I can always talk to them.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The agency is managed well overall by an experienced and qualified registered manager. She has high expectations of what all children and young people can achieve. She also consults with children and young people. For example, the registered manager recently asked young people to devise some questions for prospective carers to be asked at the fostering panel.

The registered manager has an overview of each child and young person's care plan and the progress that they are making towards their plan. She does this through effective supervision and team meetings with supervising social workers, senior supervising social workers and support workers. She is confident, from her consultation work with stakeholders, children, young people and carers, that children and young people continuously make progress from their starting points.

Leaders and managers actively promote equality and diversity. The registered manager and social work staff are skilled and sensitive to children and young people's backgrounds and experiences of abuse and neglect. They equip and expect carers to strive to add value to children's lives so that the gaps in children's development are bridged.

Although carers are successfully ensuring good outcomes for children, 19 carer households have resigned from the agency since the last inspection. Managers are talking to carers about this and identify mainly external factors as key reasons for leaving. However, carers express dissatisfaction about the lack of clarity about fees when they are taking breaks from caring or when they are the subject of an allegation.

Despite knowing the agency's weaknesses in general, leaders and managers in the organisation do not identify or analyse these in sufficient detail to prevent some ongoing negative trends. For example, poor coordination during the foster carer assessment process means that numerous new carers are presented to panel without due consideration of all necessary checks and references. A number of carers have experienced deferred decisions and additional assessment work as a result. Carers have expressed concerns about their lack of involvement in the matching of children and young people to them. Despite this, leaders and managers continue with centralised matching functions and some carers feel remote from this. Similarly, the manager has not sufficiently analysed the high carer and staff turnover or identified what, if any, impact this has had on agency effectiveness and ultimately, on children and young people.

The fostering panel's engagement with agency staff and independent assessors is not effective enough. For example, staff and panel members do not meet together to undertake joint training and discussion about promoting thorough assessments, support and training for carers. They do not work together effectively enough to ensure that foster carer reviews happen in a timely fashion, but not before, investigations into carers are concluded. Reports to panel and panel minutes do not contain clear enough analysis of issues and difficulties to ensure that the quality of assessment continuously improves and that carers' future training and support needs are met.

The registered manager has a full staff team that works energetically and effectively overall. She actively promotes team cohesion and mutual support, which benefits children, young people and carers alike. Most carers feel listened to and say that the agency empowers them to make a positive contribution as carer professionals in the team around the child.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people, and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the independent fostering agency knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing

and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC425236

Registered provider: Sunbeam Fostering Agency Limited

Registered provider address: 12 Waterside Drive, Langley, Slough SL3 6EZ

Responsible individual: Karamjit Dhull

Registered manager: Gillian Hutton-Davis

Telephone number: 02476 466718

Email address: info@sunbeamfostering.com

Inspector

Rachel Britten, social care inspector



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017