

# Sunbeam Fostering Agency

Sunbeam Fostering Agency Limited  
12 Waterside Drive, Langley, Slough SL3 6EZ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Sunbeam Fostering is a privately owned independent fostering agency. The agency is one of three fostering agencies operated by this organisation. The agency provides a range of foster placements for children who are unable to live with their birth families. The agency provides emergency, short-term, bridging, respite, long-term and parent and child placements. The agency is specifically able to meet the needs of unaccompanied children from outside the UK.

At the time of this inspection, the agency was providing placements to 254 children in 191 fostering households.

**Inspection dates:** 23 to 27 July 2018

**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:** 13 January 2015

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Most children and young people are having good experiences and making progress. The majority of placements are stable.
- Foster carers are prepared by the agency to meet the needs of children and young people that are in their care.
- Children and young people value education and aspire to achieve. The achievements of children and young people are acknowledged and celebrated by the agency.
- The agency endeavours to keep children and young people safe. Significant incidents are a rare occurrence and reported promptly. Concerns for the practice of foster carers are swiftly dealt with by the agency.
- The supervising social workers develop good relationships with the children and young people while understanding their care arrangements and needs.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- The agency has not used the wishes and feelings of children and young people to gain insight into placement instability. Some risk assessments and safe care plans for the children and young people are not sufficiently detailed.
- The quality of the minutes from the panel are not always a thorough reflection of the discussions and decisions made.
- The agency decision maker is not a senior member or director of the organisation but should be.
- Some records for children, young people and foster carers are not maintained to a high standard.

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

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarding and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (a))</p> <p>This is with specific reference to ensuring that all risk assessment and safe care plans are of an adequate quality.</p>	31 December 2018

### Recommendations

- Children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support. (NMS 1.3)
- The panel chair ensures written minutes of panel meetings are accurate and clearly cover the key issues and views expressed by panel members and record the reasons for its recommendations. (NMS 14.7)
- The fostering service's decision-maker is a senior person within the fostering service or is a trustee or director of the fostering service, who is a social worker with at least 3 years post-qualifying experience in childcare social work and has knowledge of childcare law and practice. (NMS 23.12)
- Entries in records, decisions and reasons for them are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising, distinguish between fact, opinion and third-party information and are signed and dated. (NMS 26.5)

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There are many examples of children and young people making progress. They are being well supported by the agency and foster carers, who consistently meet their everyday needs. Some children and young people have formed good relationships with their foster carers. They feel like they are part of the family and they are treated with respect. Several young people continue to live with their foster carers after they reach the age of 18 or visit regularly, and this is testament to the bonds

that they have formed.

There have been no formal complaints made by the children and young people regarding their carers or the agency. However, they do say that they can raise concerns about their care and understand the process to follow. The agency provides age-appropriate guides in different languages based on the diverse needs of the children and young people.

The agency has a high percentage of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children accommodated. The majority receive a high level of support to help them adapt to living in a new country, such as securing legal representation and learning a new language. Several of the young people who have been placed with foster carers since January 2018 are having trouble transitioning. The agency is not robustly planning nor challenging the placing authority on their behalf. In addition, the young people's views are not being properly obtained, contributing to several placement moves.

Foster carers are sufficiently prepared to care for children and young people. They demonstrate that they understand their roles and responsibilities as per the agency guidelines. The agency supplies carers with the tools to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care. Consistent training opportunities are made available and these are well attended. The agency effectively ensures that foster carers meet the Training, Support and Development Standard.

There are good examples of young people understanding the importance of education. All the children and young people are in education. The agency monitors their attendance and progress through monthly reports. Some young people aspire to attend or have already obtained places at prominent universities including Oxford and Cambridge.

The health needs of the children and young people are known and met. They are registered with the appropriate services while their foster carers monitor and facilitate their appointments. Referrals are made to the local child and adolescent mental health services when children and young people need therapeutic input due to experiencing emotional difficulties.

The achievements of children and young people are celebrated. Key events of their lives are recognised and promoted by their carers and the agency. A prime example is a recent annual awards ceremony featuring a local mayor which acknowledged the efforts of all children and young people with certificates given.

Children and young people develop age-appropriate skills. Young people can complete tasks that will assist with their eventual independence. They participate in activities of their own individual interest while developing self-confidence by engaging with friends in the community. The agency has recently started a mentoring scheme that enables young people to positively interact with and seek advice from successful professionals.

The process for becoming a foster carer is fair and just. Several assessments were recently completed in a timely manner that allowed new foster carers to join the agency. A comparable level of attention is paid to carers who were previously with another fostering agency to assess their suitability.

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

Children and young people benefit from the agency providing foster carers and staff with the skills to keep them safe and protected. This pertains to their ongoing care and their ability to take age-appropriate risk. The agency has established good links with professionals, such as the local authority designated officer in case questions arise for the safety of children and young people.

Foster carers and staff are provided with a broad range of comprehensive training to ensure that children and young people are protected. Some examples of the training provided include radicalisation, internet safety, and child sexual exploitation. The variety of training provides foster carers with strategies to assist in managing behaviours that may manifest for children and young people.

The agency monitors each placement through routine announced and unannounced visits along with supervision of foster carers. Most children and young people are taught to keep themselves safe. They are supported to take age-appropriate risks based on plans developed by their carers, supervising social workers and social workers.

Risk assessments for the children and young people are inconsistent. All risks associated with them are not fully explored. This is specifically the case for young people seeking asylum. The impact of their journeys is not considered or assessed, offering little to no guidance for carers. Additionally, safe care plans for foster carers varied in quality, for example some were comprehensive, while others were not individualised and were very brief.

The agency does not have a high rate of missing from care incidents when considering the number of children and young people placed. If an incident occurs, foster carers are aware of the procedures which they must follow.

Allegations against foster carers are addressed robustly by the managers. They take actions that keep children and young people safe while external or internal investigations take place. The agency places foster carers on hold until an outcome is reached.

The agency has successfully recruited new staff that work directly and indirectly with the children and young people. The successful candidates have their background information scrutinised and verified prior to being appointed. This includes good conduct checks for those recruited from overseas.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The agency appointed a new manager who registered with Ofsted in February 2018. She was promoted from within after holding several posts at the agency and she is well known to the staff and carers. A suitable succession plan was in place to assist the manager to get accustomed to her new role.

The agency has ample resources and is appropriately staffed to meet the needs of all those attached to the agency. Quarterly monitoring is undertaken by the manager, and quality assurance activities track the progress of children and young

people. The supervising social workers are very familiar with the children and young people and speak knowledgeably of their needs and progress.

Overall, case recording was generally satisfactory, although some records were improperly completed. Several key documents were not signed, dated or contained the wrong information.

The managers obtain the views of children, young people, and foster carers through a variety of avenues. The methods include children and young people support groups, 'meet the managers' events that allow foster carers to ask questions and feedback directly to senior managers, and participation surveys. Feedback analysis improvements are made to the quality of service to the agency, as outlined in the development plan.

Members of the fostering panel come from a range of backgrounds and bring a range of experiences to their task. However, the panel minutes are poorly written and do not reflect discussions in their entirety. In addition, the agency decision maker is independent and not a senior member of the agency.

Staff have purposeful supervision that provides time to reflect on their caseload, well-being and development. Staff feel valued and hold the agency in high regard. Training is sufficient and proactive, and the staff are provided opportunities to develop their practice through attending university and identifying their own training needs.

The agency is operating within the ethos outlined in the statement of purpose. The document remains current and, combined with the agency website, provides useful information for those seeking to use the service.

Commissioners believe that the agency works well and supplies suitable placements to children and young people. The agency maintains good relationships across its external stakeholders.

## **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 differences 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 and 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:** SC035026

**Registered provider:** Sunbeam Fostering Agency Limited

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

**Responsible individual:** Karamjit Singh Dhull

**Registered manager:** Fatima Zaidi

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## **Inspector(s)**

James Harmon, social care inspector

Suzy Lemmy, social care inspector



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