

Sunbeam Pride Fostering Service

Sunbeam Pride Fostering Service Limited

113 New Bedford Road, Luton LU3 1LE

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned agency is one of three individually registered independent agencies operated by this organisation.

This agency registered with Ofsted in September 2009. It provides a wide range of foster care arrangements and can meet the needs of unaccompanied children from outside the United Kingdom.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had 114 children living across 79 fostering households.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 27 November 2019.

Inspection dates: 27 February to 3 March 2023

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	outstanding

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

Date of last inspection: 4 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This agency makes a positive difference to the lives of the children. Most children flourish. The agency offers homes that enable some children to live with their brothers and sisters. Children benefit from living with foster carers who receive good, consistent support from a dedicated and knowledgeable staff team.

The agency closely monitors education status, attendance and attainment. All school-age children are in education. The agency consistently attends education meetings and advocates for children when there may be challenges in sustaining learning. The agency's staff are tenacious in ensuring that foster carers and supervising social workers have children's up-to-date personal education plans and school reports. The agency's expectation is that foster carers attend parents' evenings and school events. Virtual workshops that were introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic have continued. This provides tutor-led time for some children to expand their general knowledge. There is a strong focus on helping children to succeed in education. As a result, children's attendance rates are high, and many children pass exams. Some children go on to attend university.

Leaders and managers are continually striving to develop and implement new ideas to improve practice and children's experiences. There is a current drive to improve the quality of the supervising social workers' records by writing these to the child. This has resulted in excellent examples for children to read should they wish to. The quality of the foster carers' recording continues to be a work in progress. Some examples sampled did not go far enough to ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way that will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future.

The experienced placement officer works closely with supervising social workers and foster carers to ensure that children are matched with foster carers who are most able to meet their needs. Many children have lived with their foster families for some years, and there are few unplanned endings. For some children, the agency goes above and beyond expectations to ensure that they can remain with their family into adulthood. This means that those children experience continuity.

The agency has an ethnically rich community of foster carers. The children's guide is available in a range of languages. Foster carers support the identity and heritage of children. Several children live with families from the same or similar cultural background. This helps children to continue with familiar religious customs and practices.

Children spend time with their families as reflected in their local authority plan. The children learn new skills and benefit from fun experiences, such as holidays and trips to the beach. The agency arranges a good range of group activities. Children get to

meet one another and get involved with the agency staff. This helps to encourage children's feedback and participation in shaping their experience with the agency.

Foster carers learn about and practise therapeutic approaches to parenting. Many foster carers meet with the agency's therapists individually and in groups to further their understanding of the emotional needs of their children. This helps to ensure that children live with foster carers who are empathetic and resilient.

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

Children spoken with during this inspection said that they feel safe and well cared for by their foster carers.

Foster carers' annual reviews happen in good time. The agency is tenacious in seeking feedback from all children for this required yearly appraisal of continued suitability. This helps to ensure that the managers and the agency decision-maker maintain a continual overview of the help that children receive from their foster carers.

The agency staff routinely make unannounced visits. Records show that one priority is for the supervising social worker to strike up meaningful relationships with the children. Supervising social workers routinely see and speak to children alone. This helps to monitor individual children's progress. The supervising social workers are good at communicating with local authority social workers about children's development. This cultivates positive professional relationships and helps to ensure that the children have a range of adults in their network to approach should they need additional help.

Since the last inspection, there has been a change to the panel chair, as they are now employed as a senior manager at the agency. The incoming objective panel chair has relevant experience of working in fostering services. The fostering panel has good representation from independent people with a range of relevant professional and lived experiences. Overall, the quality of initial assessments is good. The foster panel provides healthy scrutiny of the evaluative and detailed reports. However, this inspection found that one assessment that recommended a parent and child lacked a targeted evaluation of the prospective foster carer's capacity to offer this experience. This does not ensure that every initial assessment focuses on the specific skills that prospective foster carers bring to this specialist fostering arrangement.

Safer care plans and household health and safety risk assessments provide an overview of the desired practices required in fostering households to help to keep all household members safe. However, the quality of the review of these documents is inconsistent, particularly when new children move in to foster homes. This means that some assessments do not go far enough to accurately describe current arrangements and expectations of the foster carers and their home. This may lead to complacent safeguarding practice.

The format of the children's individual risk assessments has been improved. The assessments are detailed and provide practical and helpful guidance for foster carers to help to reduce risk. The supervising social workers and the managers work well with foster carers and local authorities to identify risk and to implement effective strategies to reduce the risk to individual children of going missing from care and exploitation.

Allegations are promptly and efficiently shared with the relevant local authority designated officer. Foster carers who are the subject of complaints or allegations receive good support. The managers provide regular updates to the professionals working with the children about the progress and findings from internal investigations.

Concerns about foster carers' standards of care result in a return to the foster panel. The registered manager meets routinely with the head of fostering and the head of operations to discuss, monitor and review every safeguarding incident. This helps to ensure that there is focused managerial oversight of the actions identified following any concern raised about a child or a foster carer's practice. Senior managers proactively identify lessons to learn to reinforce expectations for safeguarding children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The influential and knowledgeable registered manager is suitably qualified and significantly experienced. They joined the agency shortly after the last inspection and have met the previous requirements and recommendation. The manager has been a force in modelling the high expectations for staff performance.

The manager is held in high regard by the staff and the foster carers. The manager is due to leave the agency and the responsible individual has ensured a timely handover and network of senior management support for the incoming manager. The incoming manager knows the foster carers, staff and agency well. This helps to minimise the effect of impending change.

The managers and leaders work to promote and embed best practice. The therapeutic approach to understanding attachment and regulation is rooted in the agency's ethos. Regular team meetings, senior manager-led workshops, and joint staff and foster carer training provide a reliable infrastructure to enable frequent conversations about learning from research.

Supervising social workers are accountable for the quality of their work with foster carers and children. Regular senior manager audits and clearly recorded case direction help to ensure that supervising social workers receive detailed feedback. Thorough and comprehensive staff induction, supervision, case discussions and appraisals ensure that the supervising social workers have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles. Concerns about supervising social workers' practice are dealt with fairly and swiftly. This ensures continuity of high-quality support for foster carers and their families.

Following the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency is reintroducing face-to-face training. This includes opportunities for foster carers and staff to learn together.

This is an organised, structured and well-managed agency. One of the directors is the responsible individual. The directors have taken effective action to strengthen and improve the management oversight and infrastructure. Since the last inspection, there are new senior managers in post. Their knowledge, wisdom and capacity to scrutinise practice results in them providing opportunities for supervising social workers to reflect, learn and help to lay the foundations for children to thrive.

Senior leaders' presence is visible. Annual awards for long service, foster carer appreciation days, children's achievements awards, annual 'meet the managers' and regular newsletters ensure that there are meaningful connections between the leaders' aspirations and values. This promotes cohesion and a shared vision for the care and protection of children.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the service implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. In particular, ensure that the review of household safer care plans and health and safety risk assessments accurately reflect current arrangements and expectations in the foster carers' home. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 4.5)
- The registered person should ensure that prospective foster carers are considered in terms of their capacity to look after children in a safe and responsible way that meets the child's development needs. In particular, ensure that the initial assessments for parent and child consistently include a standalone evaluation of capacity to provide this specialist arrangement. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 13.6)
- The registered person should ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way that will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. Children should be actively encouraged to read their files, other than necessarily confidential or third-party information, and to correct errors and add personal statements. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 26.6)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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: SC398706

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