

Sunbeam Pride Fostering Service

Sunbeam Pride Fostering Service Limited
110 Butterfield, Great Marlings, Luton LU2 8DL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Sunbeam Pride Fostering group is a privately-owned independent fostering agency. The agency is one of three fostering agencies registered with Ofsted. The agency was registered in September 2009. It 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 can meet the needs of unaccompanied children from outside the UK. The agency currently has 56 approved fostering households with 65 children in placement.

Inspection dates: 4 to 7 February 2019

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: 21 September 2015

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- The agency and carers have the children's best interests at heart. Decisions are always made with the child at the centre.
- The agency proactively helps carers and staff to manage risks associated with child trafficking, criminal exploitation and radicalisation.
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children receive information from knowledgeable staff and carers to help them to manage potential risks and to keep themselves safer.
- The recruitment of foster carers is responsive to the individual cultural needs of the children.
- The foster panel comprises individuals from a range of professional backgrounds. The panel members have an extensive understanding of the issues faced by children looked after.
- Carers benefit from well-resourced training to help them to respond thoughtfully to children.
- Allegations are appropriately referred to the designated officer. Complaints are investigated thoroughly and fairly.
- Children receive good-quality support from dedicated foster carers. A number of children benefit from long-term placements.
- Children have good, and in some cases excellent, relationships with their carers.
- Children feel part of their carer's family.
- Children develop interests and hobbies, take part in after-school activities and have positive, family-based experiences.
- The agency has a strong focus on keeping children safe.
- Carers value the support that they get from the agency.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Send all required information to Ofsted.
- Ensure that some carers improve their development and take up of training.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The fostering service provider must notify the Chief Inspector of any revision of the statement of purpose within 28 days. (Regulation 4 (b))	28/02/2019
The registered person must provide the Chief Inspector with a written report in respect of any review conducted for the purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to the placing authority. (Regulation 35 (2))	28/02/2019
If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in schedule 7 take place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event on column 2 of the table. (Regulation 36 (1)) This is with particular regard to any serious complaint made against a foster carer.	28/02/2019

Recommendations

- Ensure that foster carers maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio that demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by the fostering service. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 20.4)

In particular, ensure that all foster carers undertake relevant training to improve their skills.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children placed with this agency form strong and meaningful relationships with their carers, who embrace the children into their lives. Children spoke warmly about their carers. Children's comments included:

- 'Compared to four months ago when I came, [my foster carer] has helped me a lot, which I didn't think was possible. I am really happy here. I am welcomed into the family and I can talk to [the foster carer] whenever I need to.'
- 'Everything is going well with [my foster carers]. I love it here. Being in foster care has helped me a lot.'
- 'My placement is amazing. I am so happy. I have been here for over two years.'

Children make good, and in many cases exceptional, progress in all aspects of their lives. They feel valued and respected. Because of this, they flourish. A number of children stay in long-term and stable placements that meet their individual needs well, with their brothers and sisters when appropriate. Carers are fully committed to seeing the children through challenging times. The children develop good relationships with their carers, supervising social worker and managers. Children benefit from this additional support. A child said, 'My supervising social worker is fantastic. I receive great support.' Another child said, 'I am happy with the agency. The staff are really supportive. There is good out-of-hours support from people who know me.'

Children make good, and sometimes excellent, progress in their attendance and attainment in education. When required, children access booster classes and additional home tuition. Carers advocate for children to ensure that they receive the education services that they need. A child who prior to his placement was not expected to do well at school is now expected to achieve well in his GCSEs. The agency recognises and celebrates children's achievements through verbal praise, mentions in the children's newsletters and giving gift vouchers. Awards have been given for completing GCSEs, improvement in behaviour at school and exceeding expectations in subjects. The agency supports children in their education after statutory education, providing business mentors for children who have specific vocational goals and support to go on to further and higher education. Staying put placements for some children enhance their sense of stability.

Children enjoy a variety of hobbies and interests because the agency proactively encourages carers to ensure that children engage in at least two activities each week. These include Army Cadets, swimming, martial arts and football. The agency recognises children's achievements, such as one child's sporting achievement in obtaining a gold level as a lifeguard trainee and another child playing for a cricket club.

All carers receive therapeutic training that provides them with skills and tools to

support children. Carers receive additional support for children whose assessed needs require enhanced placements, such as extra visits from a senior supervising social worker who can advise on strategies, ongoing therapeutic training and monthly skills and processing workshops. Carers have a good understanding of children's behaviour and respond in line with the therapeutic training. As a result, placements that were breaking down are now stable and some children are thriving.

The agency and carers support children to ensure that their health needs are met. The carers register children with health services and support them to attend their routine health appointments. When required, children are referred to specialised health services such as mental health and counselling. Carers ensure that they cook meals in line with the children's cultural needs, embracing children's identity and providing food that children like and is healthy. A child who is relatively new in placement no longer needs to take medication, due to being more settled.

The agency, along with placing authorities, makes a concerted effort to ensure that children visit the foster carers before they move in. Some children had visits and overnights stays before moving in with their carers. Other children, due to their circumstances, were placed in an emergency. All children receive information about their carers, with pictures and information about where they are going. The children receive a welcome box and a children's guide that is available in a variety of languages. The agency provides individualised information for children who have more complex needs.

The agency is proactive in seeking children's views through discussion with carers and supervising social workers, surveys, participation groups and fun days. By ensuring that children's views are listened to, the agency empowers children and helps to ensure that the care it provides and plans for children is effective and child-centred.

Children are prepared for independence at a level that is appropriate to their age and understanding. Younger children learn self-care skills and to keep their bedrooms tidy. Carers support older young people to become more independent, so that the young people can take the bus to college and learn to budget and cook. All children have a bank account and begin to understand money and budgeting. This helps children to learn the skills that they will need in the future.

Carers support children to have contact with their birth family, in line with the requests of the placing authority. Some children have their brothers and sisters over for tea, others are taken by their carers for visits. Carers ensure that placing authorities are updated on how visits went and any impact on the child following the visit.

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

The children spoken to during this inspection said that they feel safe in their foster placements. Placing social workers reported that they have no concerns about the safe care of children. Managers take effective action to initiate safeguarding procedures and to investigate concerns. They work effectively with other

professionals to respond swiftly and appropriately. Clear records detail action taken and any further action that is required to reduce the risk of recurrence.

The agency ensures that children know how to make a complaint. Children's complaints are thoroughly looked into. The children receive verbal feedback from the supervising social worker. Therefore, children know that they are listened to and are kept safe.

Children rarely go missing from their foster placements. Incidents of going missing are usually linked to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). The majority of UASC stay and progress well with their carers. This is because they are placed with carers who receive training in supporting UASC, understand the potential trauma that the children may have experienced and have training in understanding children who have been trafficked and exploited. Carers are proactive in helping children whose first language is not English to begin to learn the language. The agency holds specific participation days for UASC, so that they can develop links with each other to support their identity. The agency seeks further resources to develop specific safety plans in agreement with placing authorities for children deemed as at high risk of being trafficked. However, for some UASC, despite the best efforts of their carers, placing authorities and the agency, they do not want to live with a family.

Staff undertake two unannounced visits to the homes of the carers and at least one visit is undertaken by a supervising social worker who is not linked to the carers, for extra independence. Records clearly show that bedrooms are checked and detail when children are seen. On occasions, when the second carer may be working full time, visits have occurred in the evening to ensure that both carers are included. Carers receive weekly support calls. A carer said that the support from the supervising social worker has been fabulous.

The recruitment of agency staff includes appropriate employment checks. The process of recruiting and assessing carers has a focus on safeguarding that includes a detailed assessment and suitable checks. The agency fostering panel members have a wide range of knowledge and experience. Membership includes individuals who foster and those who possess a professional mental health or education background. This diverse panel, led by an experienced chair, ensures inquisitiveness, meaningful questions and child-centred exploration of the assessment of the prospective carers. Records of panel minutes clearly inform of the reasons for recommending approval to the agency decision-maker, who in turn demonstrates their rationale for approval. The panel chair provides constructive feedback to the agency. Panel members will not make a recommendation unless they are fully satisfied with all aspects of the process. Children's views are consistently sought as part of the annual review of carers. This helps to ensure that children are looked after by people who do not pose a risk to them.

Children's individual risk assessments are clear and provide guidance for carers to support children. The assessments help carers to understand potential risks and how these can be minimised. The assessments are reviewed when circumstances change, to ensure that they remain effective. The children have their own safety plan, which

informs them of how their carers will keep them safe. The carers are therefore able to help children take age-appropriate risks so that they can develop independence skills and learn how to keep themselves safe.

The agency provides training to carers in managing children's risks. Many carers said that the training provided is one of the best things about the agency. Carers can access training in understanding child trafficking and sexual exploitation, attachment and safeguarding. Children's daily records demonstrate that carers implement the guidance, which results in identified risks and incidents decreasing.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, there have been three changes of manager at the agency. The current registered manager, who is a qualified social worker, was registered with Ofsted in June 2018. The senior manager and responsible individual have provided consistency for the carers and children. The managers have a good understanding of the agency's strengths and areas for improvement. They know the carers and the children well. Carers spoke highly of the managers and gave positive feedback about a recent meet the managers event, during which their opinions and suggestions about the agency were sought. Carers comments included:

- 'Our views matter to them.'
- 'We feel valued by the agency.'
- 'I have total faith in the agency.'

Due to the number of changes to staffing, some carers have come to expect frequent changes of supervising social worker. Staff spoke positively about the support that they receive from managers. They feel valued, have flexibility in their jobs and said that the management team is always there for the staff. The staff receive regular supervision, which centres on the children. Staff appreciate the time that managers spend discussing how they can support carers to improve their practice.

Staff access the training that they need to do their jobs well, including training in understanding radicalisation, trafficking, child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation. The staff team is multi-lingual, which reflects the needs of children and carers. Supervising social workers provide high-quality monthly or fortnightly, supportive supervisions for the carers. Records demonstrate detailed conversations regarding the children in placement, reflection on practice and actions to improve practice.

The agency has effective auditing systems. The registered manager and senior managers know how children are progressing and how well the agency is meeting its statement of purpose. The systems enable the managers to monitor trends and patterns and to identify areas for improvement. Quarterly management reports are available to the senior managers. This monitoring keeps the agency focused on aiming for high aspirations for the children for whom it cares.

All carers have completed their training, support and development standards within 12 months of approval. However, despite encouragement, not all carers attend training or groups to support their professional development.

Placing authorities and external agencies spoke positively about the agency. Professional working relationships are strong. The agency challenges placing authorities when it is not in agreement with action taken and when there is a delay in the receipt of paperwork.

Carers' records relating to their child provide, in some cases, a comprehensive overview of the child's day. The records provide information for the children and placing authorities on the progress and experiences of the child. In addition, carers continue to keep memorabilia for the children to ensure that they have memories of their time with their carer.

The inspection identified some administrative shortfalls. On occasion, a complaint about carers has not been notified to Ofsted. Although lack of notification prevents Ofsted from monitoring the agency's responses to incidents, appropriate action was taken and further actions were implemented to reduce the risk of recurrence. Managers have up-to-date the statement of purpose and the annual internal monitoring report. However, they have not submitted these annually to Ofsted as required. These shortfalls have not had an impact on the quality of care that children receive.

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: SC398706

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