

Fairways Care UK

Fairways Care (UK) Limited

Suite 8 Fairways House, Mount Pleasant Road, Southampton, Hampshire SO14 0QB

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Fairways Care (UK) Ltd Fostering Service is an independent fostering agency based in Southampton. It is a part of the Fairways (UK) Ltd group that provides residential placements. The agency is registered to provide a range of placements for children up to the age of 18 years, including short- and long-term foster care. The agency also provides parent and child placements. Children in placement are referred by local authorities across the southern counties. There are currently 58 full-time foster places available, with 42 children in placement.

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 November 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 23 May 2014

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

A monitoring visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 on 1 December 2015. The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken by the agency in response to a notifiable event. This visit resulted in six requirements in relation to: the agency's quality assurance processes, children's safer care plans and risk assessments, foster carer reviews, medication administration and panel procedures.

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- The agency is extremely child centred and is focused on supporting children to achieve positive outcomes.
- Children experience positive relationships with their foster carers, within which they feel valued and cared for.
- Children have access to a range of resources, including the organisation's education hub and therapists.
- Foster carers are well supported through regular supervisions, groups and 'surgeries' with a clinical psychologist.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Poor practice by foster carers is not sufficiently challenged.
- Risk assessments and safer care plans do not adequately guide foster carers on all of the actions that they must take to protect the children.
- Ofsted has not always been notified when there has been a complaint or allegation against a foster carer.

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
<p>The fostering service provider must keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and children's guide. (Regulation 4 (a))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that the statement of purpose and the children's guide provide accurate, up-to-date information on all areas required by the regulations and national minimum standards.</p>	22/01/2018
<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 safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (a))</p> <p>Specifically, focus on improving: the challenging of poor practice; the content of children's risk assessments; matching considerations; and the prevention of placement breakdowns.</p>	22/01/2018
<p>The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a policy which is agreed with the local police, setting out –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the measure to be followed to prevent children placed with foster parents from going missing from their placement, and (b) the procedure to be followed when a child is missing from a foster parent's home without permission. <p>(Regulation 13 (3)(a)(b))</p>	22/01/2018
<p>The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. (Regulation 17 (1))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that all the foster carers have completed the mandatory training and training specific to the needs of the children who they care for.</p>	22/01/2018
<p>If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or</p>	22/01/2018

bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 36 (1))

In particular, the registered manager must notify Ofsted when there has been an allegation or complaint against a foster carer.

Recommendations

- All foster carers receive training in positive care and control of children, including training in de-escalating problems and disputes. The fostering service has a clear written policy on managing behaviour, which includes supporting positive behaviour, de-escalation of conflicts and discipline. The fostering service's policy is made clear to the responsible authority/placing authority, child and parent/s or carers before the placement begins or, in an emergency placement, at the time of the placement. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 3.8)
- Staff have access to support and advice, and are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 24.4) In particular, support workers receive regular supervision.
- 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. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 26.6) In particular, children's records, including foster carers chronologies, provide a comprehensive picture of the child's experience and are accurate.
- When a child is found, they must be offered an independent return interview. Independent return interviews provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their home. ('Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care', January 2014, page 4, paragraph 31)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This agency supports its foster carers to provide nurturing family homes, which give the children consistency, structure and routine. The children share caring and valued relationships with their foster carers, which provide them with a strong foundation to grow and progress.

The foster carers actively support the children's education within a culture that encourages learning. Appropriate links with educational professionals and access to the organisation's own 'education hub' ensure that the children can access the support that they require to improve their chance of achieving their education capability. The agency has provided opportunities for the children to complete qualifications in first aid and food hygiene to enhance their future opportunities in adulthood.

A holistic approach to the children's emotional and psychological well-being supports the children to gain a more positive self-view and develop stronger emotional resilience. Foster carers obtain therapeutic support and guidance through regular consultation with the organisation's psychologist and therapists to inform their practice. As a result, the children become more confident, resulting in improvements in their behaviour and interactions with others.

Young people independence skills are promoted. Foster carers proactively support the children to develop the necessary skills in preparation for adulthood. Foster carers and their supervising social workers work closely with the children's placing authorities to ensure that there is a pathway plan in place with realistic targets so that children are being equipped for adult life.

Foster carers are committed to the children who they care for, and aim to provide stability and permanence. Many young people remain with their foster carers in 'staying-put' arrangements at the age of 18, providing them with support and consistency in their early adult life.

Fun and safe experiences are championed by the foster carers. The children have opportunities to try new things and take part in a variety of activities suited to their interests and hobbies. As a result, the children increase their self-confidence and extend their social network.

Through careful and sensitive guidance from the foster carers, the children are supported to improve their relationships with friends and families. As a result, the children maintain a sense of belonging within their families and benefit from their ongoing support.

Children have excellent opportunities for participation. The agency and wider organisation are committed to including every child and hearing their voice. Children shape the development of the agency through child-friendly consultation, activities

and groups.

A focus of the agency is to support children placed in residential care to move into a family setting through foster placements. This has been extremely successful for two young people who said that their placements with this agency had 'saved them'. Both described that moving to live in a family environment helped them to significantly reduce their risk-taking behaviours and violent and aggressive outbursts.

The quality of recording is poor in places. Children's risk assessments often refer to the wrong child. Foster carers' chronologies do not provide a comprehensive picture of the child's experience.

Matching of children to their foster carers in some cases is weak. Records do not demonstrate a clear and considered approach to matching children with prospective foster carers.

Foster carers provide stable long-term placements. However, where placements are at risk of breaking down, staff have not always advocated effectively for placement disruption meetings, to ensure that all possible support options have been considered to prevent placements from ending.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Children said that they feel safe within their foster families. Children are able to share their concerns with their foster carers and are confident that their foster carers will act on these.

Supervising social workers develop good relationships with the children and visit them at least monthly. These visits, along with yearly unannounced visits, ensure that the children have regular opportunities to speak to known professionals and share any worries or concerns.

Children's risk-taking behaviours are reducing as foster carers work with the children to help them to understand risks and to take more responsibility for their own safety. For example, young people who were previously at high risk of child sexual exploitation or going missing from home no longer put themselves in risky situations.

Missing from home incidents are rare. The majority of incidents are for a number of hours, with a very low number of incidents of the children going missing from home overnight. Foster carers and the agency's staff follow missing from home procedures appropriately. They alert the necessary agencies and support them in establishing the child's whereabouts and ensure that they return home safely. Agency staff advocate on the children's behalf to obtain a return home interview from their placing authority. However, this has not always been successful, and in such cases this represents a missed opportunity to establish the reasons for a child going missing from home, in order to prevent further incidents. The agency's missing from

home policy has yet to be approved by local police.

Risks to children are known and understood. However, strategies to minimise these are often generic and not explicit. Children's risk assessments do not adequately advise their foster carers of all the actions that they must take to protect the child.

Foster carers have a good understanding of the triggers which cause children to display challenging behaviour. Through consistent support, foster carers are helping the children to express themselves more positively. However, there is a lack of clarity within the children's risk assessments and the agency's policies about the approach towards physical interventions. Consequently, this may cause confusion and lead to the foster carers not implementing physical intervention confidently.

Agency staff are confident of their role in protecting children. Safeguarding concerns are shared with relevant professionals, including the local authority designated officer, as appropriate. Children's complaints and allegations against the foster carers are fully investigated, with lessons learned and used to improve practice. However, managers do not always notify Ofsted of complaints against foster carers, and this hinders the regulator's ability to monitor the service.

There have been a small number of incidents of poor practice by the foster carers and these incidents have had a negative impact on the children's experiences. Managers and supervising social workers have made the necessary professionals aware and have taken action to protect the child. Although the agency has implemented robust development plans and stringent monitoring, records do not demonstrate sufficient, ongoing challenge of foster carers' practices to prevent similar incidents reoccurring.

Recruitment and preparation of foster carers focuses on providing safe placements for the children. Rigorous assessments and panel processes ensure that foster carers are approved only if they have the necessary skills and experience to provide safe, caring placements to children.

Recruitment procedures for agency staff are completed in line with regulation, ensuring that only appropriately vetted staff are employed to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The management team, the staff and the foster carers are highly motivated to provide good-quality care to the children. Managers are extremely child focused, and this translates throughout the entire agency.

The manager and his team have a sound knowledge of each foster carer and child. They understand the individual approach of the foster carer, their strengths and how these can be used for the benefit of the child. The manager and the staff are adept at changing their approach to suit the needs of the foster carer and the child in order to provide good-quality support.

Effective support by the agency's staff and skilful and nurturing care by the foster carers have ensured that the children make good progress in all aspects of their development. The agency has recently introduced new systems for monitoring the children's progress to ensure that resources are targeted effectively to help the children achieve positive outcomes.

Foster carers and the children spoke highly of their supervising social workers and the range of support offered by the agency. There is a low turnover of supervising social workers and a low caseload volume, which ensures that the supervising social workers are able to provide consistent and timely support to the foster carers

Agency staff have access to a range of training, internally and externally. One member of staff has trained as a systemic practitioner, and her role has been developed to provide additional insight and support for foster carers who may be struggling. This support has had a stabilising effect and helped to maintain placements of children which otherwise may have broken down.

Some foster carers' mandatory training has lapsed, while others have not completed training specific to the needs of the children who they support. This can affect the foster carer's ability to provide safe care. These concerns have been recognised and challenged by managers. In response, managers have reviewed the training programme so that foster carers attend all mandatory and necessary training.

Agency staff receive effective support in their roles, through supervision as well as day-to-day management support. Agency staff use reflective practice groups to discuss issues and they attend group-learning opportunities to improve and inform their practice. However, the agency's support workers are currently not receiving adequate supervision.

Rigorous monitoring systems ensure that the managers have a good oversight of all aspects of the service and have a good understanding of the agency's strengths and weaknesses. The agency's development plan demonstrates the managers' awareness of the agency's shortfalls and how they will be addressed to improve the experience and outcomes for the children.

The panel fulfils its quality-assurance function through providing insightful and helpful feedback to the agency regarding the quality of assessments. This is supporting the agency to improve.

There have been significant improvements to the panel process. A new panel chair has been appointed. Under his leadership, the panel decision-making ensures a robust response and ensures that foster carers' terms of approval lie within their skills and experience. Panel minutes provide good-quality recordings of discussions and reasons for panel decision-making.

Children, their parents and placing authorities are not provided with accurate information about all aspects of the agency. The statement of purpose and children's guide do not contain all the information required by regulations and standards.

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: SC038930

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