

Red Kite Fostering

Red Kite Fostering Limited

The Old Surgery, The Meads, Kington, Herefordshire HR5 3DQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a private limited agency based in Herefordshire. The agency provides a range of fostering placements, including long-term, short-term, emergency and respite placements.

The agency provides foster placements in England and Wales. At the time of the visit, the agency had six fostering households in England and was providing placements for nine children.

A registered manager is in post.

Inspection dates: 25 to 29 July 2022

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: 9 August 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

This agency was judged inadequate at the last full inspection. The inspection resulted in three compliance notices being issued under regulations 8, 11 and 20.

A monitoring visit was carried out on 28 September 2021 to review the action taken by the provider to meet the three compliance notices. Inspectors found that

sufficient action had been taken for two of the compliance notices, under regulations 8 and 11, to be considered met. However, managers still did not demonstrate sufficient oversight of the safe recruitment of staff. Therefore, the compliance notice under regulation 20 was not considered met and was reissued. In addition, ongoing shortfalls in the safeguarding of children remained. As a result, Ofsted raised a compliance notice under regulation 12.

A further monitoring visit was carried out on 23 November 2021 to review the two compliance notices. Inspectors found that regulation 12 had been met. The compliance notice under regulation 20 was not considered to be fully met; however, Ofsted was satisfied with the progress made in this area. As a result, it was not considered proportionate to issue a further compliance notice under this regulation. A requirement was raised.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The agency provides a good quality of care to children, and their experiences and outcomes are positive. Children, some of whom have complex needs, receive personalised care that meets their needs, and they are kept safe.

Children make good progress from their starting points. They share trusting relationships with their carers. The inspector observed a warm and affectionate relationship between a child and their carer during a conversation in the agency's office. Another child informed the inspector that he plans to be living with his carers until he is at least 21. These positive relationships help children to feel safe and secure.

Children confirm that they feel listened to. They are aware of how to raise complaints, but do not do so. The agency's fostering support worker ensures that children have a voice within the fostering service. Children can influence the development of the agency through consultation, which helps them to shape the services provided.

Children's learning outcomes and general development are good. They make good academic and vocational progress. School attendance is good, and children make steady progress from their starting points. Children develop new skills and have fun. For example, some learn new languages, are part of school sports teams, enjoy caravan holidays and much more.

Children benefit from the agency's therapeutic ethos that they are beginning to instil. Carers are now being provided with the skills to resolve difficult issues. This is to support children's healthy and emotional well-being and to provide them with an opportunity to explore complex issues in a safe, therapeutic environment.

New and experienced carers state that they feel welcomed to the 'agency family'. Preparation training and assessments of potential foster carers are thorough. This ensures that foster carers understand and are committed to the ethos of the agency. Children contribute to foster carers' annual reviews, which enhances the overall experience for all children living in fostering households.

A local authority social worker said, 'The carers clearly delight in [name of child] and see him as part of their family for life beyond 18. They are referred to as "Rolls-Royce quality" foster carers.'

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

Carers keep children safe. Foster carers and agency staff identify, understand and manage risk well. Safer care plans and risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated. Also, the agency's response to significant incidents involving children is efficient and effective. This helps to ensure that children are kept safe.

Children do not go missing from home. Carers are prepared and supported to respond to children who may go missing or may be at risk of harm. This includes children being vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and radicalisation. Carers implement the correct procedures to keep them safe, depending on the needs of each child. Managers take immediate action when they feel that foster carers may not have responded to children's behaviour in an appropriate manner. This oversight means that foster carers promote positive behaviour and manage most incidents successfully.

The fostering agency works with carers to help to provide a trauma-informed approach to their care. Carers appreciate this and feel that it helps them to sustain their placements. One carer said, 'We use the skills provided from the training, we find it very beneficial.'

The agency works well with partner agencies and responds effectively to concerns with children. The registered manager ensures that meetings are requested and conducted that focus on the health and well-being of the children. For example, when carers were informed that their child may be being bullied at a new high school, the registered manager swiftly contacted the school principal to discuss the concerns and next steps.

When appointing new staff and panel members, the agency has not always followed safer recruitment practice. For example, the inspector found that the agency had not consistently recorded a full employment history or gaps in employment during the recruitment process.

Occasionally, carers are the subject of allegations. The agency's staff deal with most of these instances appropriately. The staff challenge other professionals to meet children's needs effectively in a timely way, which helps to avoid unnecessary delays. However, during one investigation into an allegation, the child was not spoken to, to clarify his version of events. This was a missed opportunity to ensure that the child felt supported and heard.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Following the last inspection, the leadership team compiled a thorough action plan. The agency now complies with regulations and is focused firmly on the needs of the children. One consequence of the improvement plan was the loss of the supervising social workers. The registered manager has currently taken on this role as an interim measure, which has helped to stabilise the agency and role model good-quality support to the foster carers.

Improvements to foster carers' experiences and training when joining the agency, which includes the 'buddying system', have resulted in better engagement with all carers. This process has been vital to the improvements to the service and adherence to the agency's statement of purpose.

Staff feel well supported. One member of staff said, 'During my time here, I have developed, and I feel listened to.' Another said, 'The agency's management is always very supportive and tries to get their employees to exceed at everything they do.' The management and development of staff is effective. Staff appreciate the newly implemented working from home policy and having manageable caseloads. They have good local knowledge of their areas, which benefits carers and children.

Staff complete foster carer assessments comprehensively. When there are further questions that need answering, these are obtained thoroughly. The annual review process of foster carers is thorough. This promotes the regular review of foster carers' suitability to continue to care for children.

The service's fostering panel operates effectively and benefits from having a membership that is drawn from a diverse range of professional backgrounds. The panel undertakes clear and appropriate analysis of the work presented at panel meetings. The administration of the fostering panel is effective and panel meeting minutes are sufficiently detailed.

Managers' and staff's communication with other professionals is effective. A local authority social worker said: 'The agency is always quick to respond, I am provided with details of colleagues if the supervising social worker is out of office, which is useful. Discussions have always been constructive, and actions put in place to resolve any issues promptly.'

Foster carers and staff receive training and written guidance, which helps them to understand their role and meet the needs of the children they care for. However, there is a need for some foster carers to complete and refresh their training in medication administration and health and safety. During the visit, the inspector was shown that this is available for the carers to be actioned.

The agency uses an electronic recording system as part of its filing system. This is still in its infancy and learning is still ongoing. Difficulties to locate specific files for children during the inspection process were evident. This is an area that requires improvement to improve the efficiency of the service.

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 not—</p> <p>employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so, or;</p> <p>allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person—</p> <p>is of integrity and good character;</p> <p>has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work they are to perform;</p> <p>is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform;</p> <p>and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c))</p> <p>This relates to safer recruitment of panel members.</p>	<p>12 September 2022</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by the fostering service. Foster carers should complete all training required to meet the needs of the children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 40, paragraph 20.4)
- The registered person should ensure that investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are handled fairly, quickly and consistently in a way that provides effective protection for the child and at the same time supports the

person who is the subject of the allegation. Fostering services follow the framework for managing cases of allegations of abuse against people who work with children as set out in 'Working together to safeguard children'. This specifically relates to ensuring that children's views are considered following allegations of potential harm. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 45, paragraph 22.9)

- The registered person should implement a system to monitor the quality and adequacy of record-keeping and take action when needed. This relates to the auditing of the recording system used by the agency. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 52, paragraph 26.2)

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: SC417504

Registered provider: Red Kite Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: Rhos House, Old Radnor, Presteigne, Powys LD8 2RP

Responsible individual: Carole Barnes

Registered manager: Amelia Benson

Telephone number: 01544 231657

Inspector

Key Brammer, Social Care Inspector

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