

# BETA Care Services

Beta North Limited T/A Beta Care Services  
Beta Care Services, Evans Business Centre, Durham Way South,  
Aycliffe Business Park, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5 6XP  
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Beta Care Services is an independent fostering agency which has been registered with Ofsted since 2012. The agency operates in the north-east of England and provides emergency, respite, short- and long-term foster placements. At the time of the inspection, eight approved fostering households were caring for 16 children and young people.

**Inspection dates:** 12 to 16 March 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:** 20 December 2013

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Children and young people are living in placements where they are thriving and have a sense of belonging to their foster family.
- Good-quality fostering assessments demonstrate that carers have the knowledge and skills to foster and are well prepared for the task.
- Children and young people are making good progress in their educational settings.
- Effective safeguarding practice protects children and young people from harm and promotes their safety.
- Children and young people are rarely involved in risk-taking behaviour such as going missing. When they do go missing, there is an effective response from foster carers and the agency.
- Effective supervision and support equips foster carers extremely well. Foster carers feel valued and part of the team.
- There is a responsive and effective out-of-hours support service provided for carers.
- Leaders have detailed knowledge of the agency's foster carers and the children and young people placed with them. This helps them to provide effective support.
- The agency benefits from good leadership. Managers are visible to foster carers and children and young people.
- Leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and development areas of the service.
- Placing authorities have provided highly positive feedback about this service.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- The agency's review of the quality of care does not evidence consultation with carers, children and young people and placing authorities.
- The agency provides newly approved carers with all the relevant policies and procedures but does not maintain a record of induction.
- Panel members have not had a formal induction.
- Record-keeping practice could be enhanced. Some documentation lacks detail such as dates of completion.

## 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 system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority). (Regulation 35 (3))	27/04/2019
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 bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 36 (1))	27/04/2019

### Recommendations

- Ensure that all new foster carers receive an induction.  
(National Minimum Standards, 20.1)
- Ensure that each person on the central list is given induction training which is completed within 10 weeks of joining the central list.  
(National Minimum Standards, 23.9)
- Ensure that each person on the central list is given the opportunity of attending an annual joint training day with the fostering service's fostering staff.  
(National Minimum Standards, 23.10)
- Ensure that 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.  
(National Minimum Standards, 26.5)

## Inspection judgements

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

Children and young people are thriving in stable homes provided by committed and compassionate foster carers. When children are placed, they are provided with a welcome booklet and children's guide to the agency. These outline their rights and entitlements, and the expectations they can have of their carers. The agency carefully considers the needs of each child and young person placed and their compatibility with prospective fostering households. Children and young people are well matched to their fostering families and, as a result, many benefit from long-term placements. Wherever possible, children and young people are introduced to their foster carers and visit their new home in advance. When this is not possible, the agency ensures that a planning meeting is held and captures all relevant information to allow them to support the fostering household appropriately to provide a good standard of care.

Foster carers are assessed rigorously, and this prepares them well for the fostering task. Children and young people spoke positively of their experiences of being fostered. One young person said, 'They care about me, they treat me like family. They make me feel happy all the time.' Another young person said, 'They are the best foster carers in the world. I have got to say I don't know what I would do without them.'

Children and young people are encouraged to provide feedback to their foster carers' review process. They are also able to influence the development of the agency through initiatives such as the children and young person's panel. Leaders have recently recruited a youth participation worker to develop this area of practice further.

Children and young people receive good support to achieve an optimum level of physical and emotional health. Foster carers work closely with healthcare professionals to ensure that children's and young people's needs are met. One child has a significant disability which has limited his mobility. It was originally felt that he may not be able to walk. His foster carers have taken him to specialist swimming sessions, which has strengthened his legs, and consequently he has been able to take some steps. This is exceptional progress. Children and young people are supported to lead active lifestyles and eat a balanced, healthy diet. The agency has commissioned a therapeutic service for children and young people identified as needing additional support with their emotional well-being. One aspect of this service is the introduction of a 'stressbuster' group for children and young people to learn strategies and skills to manage their emotions in a safe and socially acceptable manner. This demonstrates the agency's commitment to helping children and young people secure good mental health.

Children and young people are supported to access positive activities and to pursue their individual interests and talents. One young person who has a disability, who previously struggled to access community resources, is now able to attend outings

and activities in the local area. Foster carers meet other fostering households for 'fun days' and agency-led activities at least quarterly, examples of which include a Christmas meal. Contact arrangements are facilitated in accordance with the wishes and feelings of children and young people in line with the placing authority's plans.

Some young people have moved on after being well prepared for a greater level of independence. The agency promotes the 'Staying Put' agenda, and carers are aware that they have the full support of the agency if they are to commit to young people beyond the age of 18. The service monitors and reviews placement endings including the few that were unplanned, with a view to learning from such instances and achieving greater stability for children and young people in the future.

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

Very few children or young people have been missing from their foster placements. When they have been missing, the agency has responded well. Foster carers understand and follow clear reporting and record-keeping procedures. They work closely with other agencies to prevent further instances of a similar nature. Children and young people rarely exhibit challenging or risk-taking behaviour. The agency provides comprehensive supervision and support to carers to ensure that foster carers learn from incidents and to provide a multi-agency perspective on managing future behaviour. Children and young people have made good progress and become increasingly safer in their foster placements.

Staff undertake unannounced visits to foster carers biannually. Foster carers' homes are subject to an annual health and safety check. This provides assurance that children and young people are receiving the high standard of care that the agency expects, while living in a safe environment. Staff visit fostering households frequently. They provide carers with thorough supervision and good levels of support. In addition to seeing foster carers, staff also see the children and young people regularly. This provides children and young people with opportunities to speak openly about their care experiences.

Children and young people said that they feel safe. They have developed close bonds with their foster families and trust the adults who look after them. Incidents requiring physical intervention are rare. One young person was exhibiting highly challenging behaviour which posed a risk to her own safety. Foster carers followed a physical intervention plan, which was agreed with the agency and placing authority to minimise the risk posed to the young person's safety. This strategy has been used proportionately and safely on three occasions. The young person has since had therapeutic intervention and, with the help of her foster carers, has successfully managed her emotions in a safer and more socially acceptable manner. There have been no recent incidents of a similar nature.

The agency provides training for foster carers, staff and panel members on a variety of topics which includes self-harm, internet safety, substance misuse and anti-extremism. Staff, panel members and carers are recruited safely and vetted thoroughly. A robust fostering panel makes a meaningful contribution to the quality

of safeguarding within the agency. While incidents have been well managed, not all significant incidents have been notified to Ofsted without delay as required in regulation. This does not allow the regulator sufficient oversight of safeguarding matters, and a requirement is made to address this shortfall.

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

The registered manager is a qualified social worker who has relevant experience of working in a safeguarding team for a local authority. She has had involvement with the agency for five years, three of them as an independent panel member and a further two years working alongside the fostering manager, supervising and supporting carers. She was registered with Ofsted in February 2018. She is currently studying for an appropriate level 5 leadership qualification and is working in a collaborative capacity with the responsible individual to develop and grow this service.

The registered manager is a passionate and caring individual who is dedicated to improving outcomes for children and young people who are in the care of the agency. The responsible individual also demonstrates a very detailed knowledge of the service and shares the manager's passion for improving the life chances of the children and young people living with their foster carers. They both have a very hands-on role in the agency, as they supervise and support all the families between them. Their intention is to develop a high quality service and increase their capacity to support more carers by recruiting additional supervising social workers. At the present time, the service is well resourced given the number of families it supports.

Both leaders receive practice supervision from a qualified and experienced practitioner who was previously the registered manager of the service. Foster carers receive regular supervision and visits from the agency. These sessions are recorded and provide an opportunity to review the care provided for children and young people and any training and other support needs that the foster carers may have. There is a regular foster carer support group meeting, the 'biscuit barrel', where foster carers meet to discuss issues and anything they feel is important to them.

Foster carers have provided very positive feedback about the support they receive from the agency. One carer said, 'Being such a small agency, it feels personal. We all know one another.' Another carer said, 'We all support each other and there is good attendance and involvement at the biscuit barrel. There is always someone available, and the managers know all of the children and us.' The agency is achieving its stated aims and objectives that are published in its statement of purpose. This is available to view on the agency's website.

The agency's central list of fostering panel members brings a diverse range of backgrounds and experience to the panel. The panel chair is independent of the agency and is suitably qualified and experienced. The panel provides sufficient independent scrutiny and challenge. However, panel members have not routinely had the opportunity to have development days to support their role. They have not all had a formal induction process into their role. Recommendations are made to

enhance this area of practice.

Leaders actively monitor the quality of care provided. They gather feedback from children and young people foster carers and placing authorities through the agency's annual review of foster carers. This feedback is not evident in the overall annual review of the quality of care provided by the agency. A requirement is made to address this shortfall. There is a varied and effective training and development programme for foster carers and agency leaders and staff. This ensures that practice is based on the most current research and that foster carers are well supported to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care. Foster carers are provided with access to the agency's policies and procedures in electronic format when they are approved. However, there is no formalised induction process to ensure that they have read and understood the policies and procedures or to identify further learning needs at this point. Therefore, a recommendation is made to enhance this area of practice.

The agency has developed positive working relationships with placing authorities. One social worker commented, 'I like their involvement at meetings and with carers. I like their professionalism and view of the case in hand, which is helpful when working together with complex decisions. I don't have anything to say they could improve on.' Another social worker said, 'This child was always referred to as one that would require residential care, but he has functioned and progressed so well in a family environment'.

## **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:** SC448211

**Registered provider:** Beta North Limited T/A Beta Care Services

**Registered provider address:** Beta Care Services, Evans Business Centre,  
Durham Way South, Aycliffe Business Park, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5  
6XP

**Responsible individual:** David Bartlett

**Registered manager:** Charlotte Wake

**Telephone number:** 01325 328 336

**Email address:** info@betacareservices.com

## **Inspector(s)**

Nicola Thomas, social care inspector

Mark Kersh, social care inspector



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2018