

# Fostering People Limited

Fostering People Limited

Suite D, The Point, Welbeck Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7QW

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency registered with Ofsted in 2003. It is owned by a private company. It provides a range of placements, including: short-/long-term, respite, parent and child, remand, emergency, sanctuary seeking and short breaks and mainstream placements for children who have a disability. There are currently 307 approved fostering households and 428 children placed with the agency.

**Inspection dates:** 28 January to 1 February 2019

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of last inspection:** 5 October 2015

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is outstanding because:

- Children make outstanding progress in all areas of their lives, particularly in relation to their education and training needs.
- Children feel listened to and contribute fully to their care. They engage with their carers, agency staff and managers.
- Foster carers feel valued and extremely well supported by agency staff and managers.
- There is a commendable focus on research informing practice in the agency. Several areas of work are worthy of wider dissemination.
- Staff and managers work proactively and closely with a wide range of involved agencies and professionals. They constantly strive to learn and improve the services that they provide.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children receive highly personalised care and support. From their starting points, there is clear evidence of significant progress being made in children's lives. They flourish in their foster placements. They feel valued and have a strong and positive voice in all aspects of the care that they receive. Feedback from children includes:

- 'I could not ask for a better foster carer. She is fully supportive of all my needs.'
- 'This is the happiest I have ever been in my life. I feel totally safe.'
- 'I love it here. I couldn't ask for a better placement. I love my carers to the end of the world.'

Children receive excellent support in relation to their educational needs. The agency, for over three years now, has accessed data from the Department for Education. Staff plot and track the historical attendance and exclusion figures for each child. Evaluation of this data enables agency staff to develop a clear and detailed understanding of the past and present needs of children. Staff provide training and support to carers in relation to educational issues. Carers act as powerful and knowledgeable advocates for children in respect of their entitlements and rights in education. Such innovative work is worthy of wider dissemination.

Children have their health needs extremely well met. The agency employs an independent therapist. They provide support and guidance to both carers and children on behavioural and emotional issues. There is clear evidence of this leading to improved placement stability. As one carer said: 'The therapist is amazing and has helped us to support children, where placements may have ended otherwise.'

The agency has a bespoke short-break and mainstream service for children with disabilities. This has developed since the last inspection and reflects the total commitment of managers to meeting the needs of all children. One placing authority senior manager commented: 'We have a great relationship with the relevant managers in this agency, with good communication and understanding of the needs of our children.'

Extensive work has been done by managers to consider unplanned endings within the agency. Research informs this work and reflects the commitment of staff and managers to reducing such endings. Work continues to consider the support needs of carers and children in the initial weeks of a placement being made. This leads to increased stability and security for both children and carers. This work is also worthy of wider dissemination.

Children feel part of the fostering family. Several children have remained with their carers under staying put arrangements. There are plans for several more children to remain when they turn 18. The stability and sense of security that children feel is a

testament to the commitment and dedication of the agency carers. Some children have also been adopted by their carers, or are going through the process.

The agency has recently set up its own children in care council, called 'The Link'. Children play a key and active role in influencing how the agency operates. Children not only speak positively about their carers but also of their attachment to the agency, its staff and managers. This is commendable for such a large agency.

Children learn skills to prepare them for independence. They gain in confidence and feel supported to take age-appropriate risks. They gain a real sense of belonging. They embrace the positive experiences offered to them and have aspirations and goals for their futures.

Carers report being very happy working for this agency. They feel that the assessment process is robust and fair. They have excellent support from their supervising social workers, as well as managers in the agency. They attend support groups and regular events with their birth and looked after children. They feel highly valued and respected as carers.

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

Staff and carers fully understand the risks posed to and from children placed with them. They work closely and proactively with agency staff and placing authorities to ensure that children are safe. They also understand the histories of children and what potential triggers there may be for their behaviours. They work closely with the therapist to ensure that children receive the support that they need, as well as carers developing strategies to support them.

Children rarely go missing from care. There are clear and commendable systems in place to address such behaviours. Carers diligently follow local and national procedures and protocols to ensure the safe return of children. The administration team has excellent systems in place to request and chase return home interviews. This reflects the commitment of agency staff and carers in understanding and responding to such concerning behaviours. Regular and extensive management monitoring is also used to learn from such incidents. Managers take action to consider and put in place additional support to placements.

Carers receive excellent training in relation to exploitation, bullying, radicalisation and other forms of abuse. Extensive analysis and evaluation has been done recently on child sexual exploitation and other forms of exploitation. Managers consider emerging themes and issues, based on research. They provide staff with bespoke training. This vastly improves the ability of carers to recognise signs of abuse and exploitation and to take necessary action to protect children. The work being done by agency managers on exploitation is worthy of wider dissemination.

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

All managers in the agency have exceptionally high ambitions, visions and

expectations for children and their carers. They consistently seek to improve the services that they provide and to improve the outcomes of children.

Children are central to all work carried out by agency staff and managers. There is a commendable learning ethos. Managers use research to inform their practice. This is evident throughout all aspects of the agency and how services are planned and provided. There is abundant evidence of the prioritising of children's needs and in significant progress being made for each child.

Managers understand the barriers for looked after children. They use highly innovative methods to ensure that such barriers are overcome. An example of this relates to the agency's involvement in the Mockingbird programme. This is an innovative foster care model. It provides respite care, peer support, social events, training and support to carers. This agency is trailblazing this exciting model of care with great success as part of a national initiative. As one involved carer states: 'Mockingbird is the best thing that we could have joined in our eight years of fostering. It is good for everyone and should be the only way fostering is done.'

Agency staff report exceptionally high levels of satisfaction in their roles. They feel well supported, trained and respected. Training opportunities for staff and carers are excellent. They include online and classroom courses. Carers have excellent out of hours support. They not only know and trust their supervising social workers but also managers.

The recruitment and assessment process is robust and prevents unsuitable adults from working with children. The fostering panel is robust, challenging and child-focused. The agency decision-maker fully considers all documentation and makes exceptionally detailed and well informed and recorded decisions.

The placement team plays an integral part in identifying and securing placements for children. A recent development includes staff making video profiles of carers. These are then shared via an app with placing social workers, who can show them to children before they move into their placement. Such innovative and child-focused initiatives are worthy of wider dissemination.

Excellent quality assurance and safeguarding practices are evident. Senior management oversight of all allegations, incidents and complaints protects children. Management monitoring and recording systems enable prompt action to be taken for any relevant issues. Managers across the agency work closely to ensure that the agency's aims and objectives are met at all times.

Feedback from involved agencies and professionals is consistently positive. One placements team manager in a local authority states: 'The support to our children in care has been exceptional. Communication is very good. We have a very positive working relationship with them, inclusive of their placement team, supervising social workers and administration team.'

## **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:** SC043914

**Registered provider:** Fostering People Limited

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## **Inspectors**

Tracy Murty: social care inspector

Amanda Ellis: social care inspector

Ros Chapman: social care inspector



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