

# Mosaic Foster Care

Suite 2, Chalkwell Lawns, 648–656 London Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 9HR  
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Mosaic foster care provides specialist therapeutic solo placements for children who have experienced trauma and require specific assessments and/or therapeutic-led placements. The service provides needs-led therapeutic placements with the underpinning principle of planning for permanency.

This fostering service is provided by a small private provider that also operates a school and a therapeutic children's home, both of which are registered with Ofsted.

The agency is well managed by a suitably qualified and experienced manager. The manager has been in post since September 2017.

**Inspection dates:** 21 to 25 January 2019

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good

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.

**Date of last inspection:** 7 March 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is outstanding because:

- The agency undertakes meticulous matching and provides extremely well-planned placements.
- The agency provides bespoke packages of care.
- Therapy is fully integrated into the service and the children receive wraparound support.
- The agency works exceptionally closely and effectively with other professionals.
- The approach to safeguarding is proactive and robust.
- The clear models of care are based on current research and inform the way that carers and staff support the children.
- The agency undertakes effective and comprehensive monitoring of children's progress.
- Children benefit from comprehensive additional support systems.
- The agency staff and carers are dynamic and enthusiastic.
- Managers provide effective supervision and support for the staff.
- Everyone who works for the agency has consistently high aspirations for children to thrive. As a result, this fostering agency makes a great difference to the children.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- One panel member's recruitment file did not contain all of the required information.

## **What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?**

### **Recommendations**

- The fostering service implements clear written policies and procedures on recruitment to, and maintenance of, the central list of persons considered by them to be suitable to be members of a fostering panel ('the central list') and on constitution of fostering panels. ('Fostering services: National minimum standards', 14.1)

In particular, evidence that two written references are obtained and professional qualifications are scrutinised for every panel member.

## Inspection judgements

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

The children thrive in secure and nurturing environments that they love. The children receive excellent-quality, highly individualised care and wraparound support that meets their particular needs. As a result, placement breakdowns are rare. Social workers said that the carers make a great difference to the children's lives. A social worker said, 'The carers are absolutely fantastic. I can't praise them enough. They really do love the children.'

The agency thoroughly scrutinises all referrals. Placements are only offered once an agency matching meeting involving the carer, therapist, agency social worker and manager has taken place, and all agree that the carer can meet the child's immediate and long-term therapeutic needs effectively. Meticulous planning ensures that the children have gradual introductions. This helps the children to settle and quickly develop relationships with their carers.

Fostering households provide solo placements that enable the carers to focus on the complex needs of the child. Integration of the children's views into care planning is central to the agency's therapeutic model of care. For example, the agency enabled brothers and sisters to live together. This had not previously been thought possible. The agency undertook specific therapeutic work with the children, promoted the possibility to the placing authority and changed the carer's approval to make this happen. As a result, these children are now able to grow up together and want to stay with their carers permanently.

The children make strong progress socially, emotionally, educationally and in their health and well-being. The children are well supported in their preparation for living independently. They are supported to take age-appropriate risks within personally safe boundaries. The children are growing in confidence and maturity and developing their independence, all of which contribute to improved self-esteem. The children now have aspirations and are proud of their personal growth and achievements. A social worker said, 'I almost cried when I saw the changes.'

The integrated-therapy programme helps the children to understand and begin to come to terms with their personal histories. The carers operate at an enhanced level and provide excellent emotional holding in times of crisis. A child described how, because of the therapy that they received, they had been able to rebuild their relationship with their family.

The children are well supported to maintain a healthy lifestyle and optimum physical well-being. The agency provides effective additional targeted support when needed. For example, a support worker takes a child to the library each week to ensure that they understand and keep up to date with their coursework. A teacher said that they had been 'blown away' by the agency's support for the child.

Carers and agency staff provide the children with opportunities to try new things. The agency runs well-attended social clubs and activities that provide the children with safe spaces in which to develop their confidence and social skills. The children spoke animatedly of their experiences, such as regular horse-riding activities and enjoying snorkelling on their many trips abroad. Other children talked about the joy of being one of the family, being able to snuggle up in matching onesies with their carer to watch television or having a chat at the local coffee shop. The children experience positive parenting and develop exceptionally strong bonds with their foster families. The children said that it is the small things that carers do that make such a huge difference and show them that they are very much loved. One carer commissioned individually named Christmas decorations for all of the family including the foster child. A child said, 'I know that I'm loved. [My carer] says I love you all the time.' Another child said, 'I wouldn't change it at all. It's just easy and natural. I want to be with her [the carer] forever.'

The agency only approves new carers who it has absolute confidence in, and who fully understand the ethos of the agency. New carers are welcomed, prepared and assessed effectively. The agency uses current research and models of care to underpin its therapeutic approach. The agency staff provide excellent-quality guidance and support for carers to help them integrate these models of care into their daily lives. As a result, the carers are insightful and provide an enhanced level of therapeutic fostering support for the children.

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

The children said that they feel safe and that they are well protected. Effective help and protection are at the core of all practice at the agency. Good-quality risk assessments guide carers in how to keep children safe and how to help them to take age-appropriate risks, so enabling them to develop an understanding of how to protect themselves. The level of risk is clarified by a traffic-light system. The children understand what this means and how to move to the next level of independence.

Risk assessments are reviewed by agency workers, the carers and partner professionals at regular case-discussion safeguarding meetings. These meetings are coordinated by the agency to ensure a comprehensive and consistently applied approach to safeguarding each child. A social worker said, 'I've never had such a proactive safeguarding approach before.' Another social worker said, 'This child is high risk at times, but to walk away at the end of my visits, comfortable thinking he's in the right place with the right people, is priceless.'

The carers understand that it is their core responsibility to keep the children safe. The children have experienced high levels of trauma. Foster carers receive excellent support and training to help them undertake specialist fostering. The agency has arranged individual bespoke training for carers to help them to prevent and manage their disabled foster child's self-harming behaviour. This child's social worker said, 'I've been really impressed with their responses. I can't see any other agency or carers who would be able to provide more support or be more committed to finding

a solution.'

The consistent boundaries applied by carers contribute to a feeling of well-being and security for children. Consequently, incidents of physical restraint are extremely rare. Carers are mindful that many of the children have experienced violence in their pasts. The carers establish very positive therapeutic relationships with the children, helping the children to develop the emotional vocabulary that they need to explore their feelings. The carers and therapists are successful in helping children to understand the reasons for, and to reflect on, the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others. A child said, 'I've changed so much. I'm a much nicer person now and I now care about other people more.'

The children are helped to explore issues that make them vulnerable, and how to keep safe. As a result, the risks for those children who were considered at high risk of going missing or being exploited have significantly reduced. It is now extremely rare for a child to go missing from home. A social worker said, 'The really good joint-safeguarding approach that the agency coordinates means that the risk has completely dropped off the scale. I was so worried I couldn't sleep at night. She [the child] was so vulnerable. Now I have no concerns.'

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

The agency has been through a period of transition since the last inspection. There has been a change of manager and the agency has widened its ethos to supporting children who have experienced severe trauma. The senior management team shares a clear and ambitious vision with the staff and carers.

The agency is well resourced. The children receive wraparound support from their carers, therapists and support staff. The children's progress is monitored in a number of ways, ensuring that their individual needs, experiences and progress remain at the heart of the service.

The small size of the agency means that each staff member has a good knowledge of the children and carers with whom they work. Carers appreciate the personal touches, including the celebration of significant life events in the fostering households such as birthdays and becoming a grandparent.

The carers are well trained and are working at an enhanced level of understanding. Professionals refer to 'brilliant' carers. A professional said, 'The children absolutely adore the carers, as do I. They are amazing people.' The well-attended carer support groups are facilitated by therapists. These group meetings provide opportunities for reflection on the children's emotional well-being in the context of the secure base model of care. Carers said that the support that they receive is second to none, and that the agency gets 'better and better' every year. In addition to regular visits from the agency social worker, carers receive therapeutic clinical supervision, respite and access to children's support workers. A carer said, 'I have looked out there and I would never consider going anywhere else. There is no agency that offers even 75% of the level of support that we get.'

The staff similarly benefit from high-quality support and receive the training and supervision that they need. They are enthused by the newly introduced group supervisions and case discussions that are facilitated by an independent clinical psychologist. These meetings help the staff to build their resilience and gain the confidence to undertake further professional development.

Without exception, partner professionals said that the agency staff and carers work exceptionally closely with them to ensure that the children's needs are consistently well met. A partner professional said, 'I've worked with lots of foster carers in agencies over the years. This has been the best. They are the most professional, competent agency and carers that I've met.' Another professional said, 'I have a happy flourishing child. This is a really excellent agency. It's my best one. I wish that all of my agencies were like this.'

The panel processes are effective. Prospective carers are only approved if the agency has absolute confidence that the applicants can meet the agency's high standards. However, the file for one panel member did not contain copies of a second reference or their professional qualification. This panel member does not have unsupervised access to children, but it does mean that all information regarding their suitability to fulfil their role has potentially not been robustly reviewed.

The manager is committed to further development, ensuring that all fostering activity is consistent with regulations, standards and good practice. All requirements from the previous inspection are met. While one recommendation has been set at this inspection, this does not detract from the excellent support provided for the carers and the children's consistently positive experiences.

## **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:** SC417598

**Registered provider:** Mosaic Foster Care Limited

**Registered provider address:** The Forge, Langham, Colchester CO4 5PX

**Responsible individual:** Rosslyn Parsons

**Registered manager:** Gregory De Smidt

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## **Inspector**

Joanna Heller: social care inspector



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