

Fostering Dimensions

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

Unique reference number	SC438506
Inspection date	06/03/2013
Inspector	David Morgan
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Agency performing the function(s) of LAs

Setting address	V-5 The Howitt Building, Nottingham Business Centre, Lenton Boulevard, Nottingham, NG7 2BY
Telephone number	01159792515
Email	charmaine@fosteringdimensions.co.uk
Registered person	Fostering Dimensions Limited
Registered manager	Charmaine Nicola Ferguson
Responsible individual	Paul Atles Grant
Date of last inspection	19/01/2012

© Crown copyright 2013

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

This fostering service is privately operated and was registered in January 2012. There are currently four carers and no children or young people.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **adequate**.

This is the first inspection since registration so there are no existing recommendations or requirements. The service is operating at an adequate level, which reflects the fact that carer approval has only recently occurred and no children or young people have been accommodated. This is therefore a period of substantial change in the service that is being welcomed in a systematic and closely monitored way by senior personnel.

The leadership of the service is effective and principled. The values that are in the Statement of Purpose are being applied and the development plan targets are being followed. The service has a positive and inclusive ethos that is appreciated by carers and professionals alike. This means that carers are suitable and able to provide positive outcomes for individual children and young people. Staff and senior personnel demonstrate a clear focus on child-safety based on a sound understanding of safeguarding processes.

This inspection identifies no breaches of regulations but makes a number of recommendations to improve standards and outcomes for children and carers.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure training is made available to foster carers to assist them in meeting the specific needs of the children they are expected to care for. This is with particular regard to providing an achievable range of required core training courses (NMS 20.8)
- ensure that foster carers' information, which cover policies and procedures, is updated regularly (NMS 21.10)
- ensure that any staff involved in assessing the suitability of persons to be foster carers are trained in assessment (NMS 23.6)
- ensure each panel member is given induction training which is completed within 10 weeks of joining the central list (NMS 23.9)
- ensure the decision maker is a senior person within the fostering service, or is a trustee or director of the fostering service (NMS 23.12)
- review each panel member's performance, including that of the chair, annually against agreed performance objectives (Volume 4, statutory guidance, paragraph 5.15)
- ensure that suitable arrangements exist for the professional supervision of the agency's Registered Manager. (NMS 24.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Since the service was registered no children or young people have been placed. Currently, therefore, it is not possible to assess actual outcomes for children and young people. However, suitable policies and procedures are in place to guide staff and carers in providing care to them. This includes paying systematic attention to their safety, health, leisure activities, involvement in the community and financial matters.

Also, appropriate sources of specialist support are in place for foster children and young people. For example, health advice is readily available regarding their emotional wellbeing, as is advice regarding substance misuse. Access to education specialists is also available from within the service so that education provision is as effective as possible. Carers are required and trained to adhere to clear procedures about managing negative behaviours.

In particular, the views of children and young people are considered to be central both to their own care and also quality assurance within the service. Senior personnel have a special, but not exclusive interest, in Black and minority ethnic groups. This strength positions the service well to ensure that individual needs arising from racial background or religion are addressed fully. Potential carers have attractive, child-friendly written and photographic information available about their homes and families. These allow children and young people to make informed contributions about their placements.

Quality of service

The quality of the service is **adequate**.

The Registered Manager and responsible individual apply great care to ensuring that new carers are suitable. This has meant refusing some applicants even though it has delayed development of the service and admission of children and young people. As a result, approvals have only started in the last few months. Important lessons have been learnt during this process and improvements have been integrated into practices.

Prompt timescales are being adhered to. This means that prospective carers are kept engaged in the process and with also their assessors. One said, 'It helped me learn how I coped with my own childhood.' They form positive relationships and consider that the support they receive is excellent. Carers are enthusiastic about the service in general and are eager to contribute to support groups. They are pleased that the service provides support to their own children too.

Written procedures show what training carers are expected to attend as their fostering careers develop. They receive effective basic training prior to approval and induction training has begun promptly. However, the subsequent core training targets are not attainable and do not address all the required topics. Support for carers is available through regular supervision. Carers have access to written policies and procedures too as well as a handbook, although these are in need of minor corrections. Individual support is given a high priority and local support groups are being developed in line with recruitment.

Children and carers benefit from adequate panel and decision making processes. The panel is newly formed but is consolidating quickly; it is already contributing to improving the quality of the service, such as the assessments of prospective carers. However, the induction process for new members is not sufficiently clear or timely and annual appraisals are not occurring at the required intervals. A qualified and experienced person is undertaking the decision making responsibilities for the service. However, this person is not a senior employee, or trustee or director. These shortfalls do not have a direct bearing on children but show that panel management is under-developed.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **adequate** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

The service is led by appropriately trained and qualified individuals. They have a thorough knowledge of safeguarding issues and their first priority is to ensure that foster parents and their households are safe. Staff and carer recruitment procedures are robust and effective monitoring processes have already led to improvements. Applicants' professional registration details are confirmed with the responsible bodies; this helps to ensure that carers, children and young people receive care of sufficient quality.

The local authority has verified that the written safeguarding procedures are of a satisfactory standard; the procedures also reflect police protocol for dealing with missing children. Carers are familiar with their responsibilities in this area, particularly the need to refer any concerns promptly. No safeguarding issues have arisen. Complaints and concerns are addressed professionally so that lessons are learnt and so that the individuals involved know they have been heard. This approach is an important and recurring part of the ethos of the service.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the independent fostering agency are **adequate**.

Senior personnel apply a clear vision of the service they want to give children and young people. This is based on defined values, including respect for each individual and effective partnerships, which they prioritise over short-term commercial progress. The effectiveness of this approach is regularly monitored from both business and practice perspectives. This means that financial viability is regularly verified and that the operation of the service is adjusted to ensure it is operating as well as possible. The Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the aims and objectives of the service and is under currently review, along with policies and procedures.

The responsible individual undertakes monitoring of the service, albeit at an appropriately low level so far. Panel processes and the assessment of carers have received particular attention and have been improved. Additional external advice is readily sought and senior personnel benefit from strong professional networks. This process directly contributes to the development of the service. Procedures are also in place to involve carers and children in monitoring exercises and other aspects of the service.

The Registered Manager and responsible individual keep abreast of professional developments by attending seminars and training events. Panel members have benefited from attending training events with prospective foster carers, which has also provided a useful team-building opportunity. Assessors have been involved in the same training events too. However, although they are appropriately qualified and experienced, they are not all trained in undertaking fostering assessments..

The Registered Manager ensures that she receives training and supervision. However, although her supervision is regular and relevant, it is not from a suitably qualified and experienced person. This shortfall has minimal negative impact on the service currently but is potentially significant for the development of the service. There are no other employees at present but the independent assessors indicate that the support provided to them is of a high standard.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of independent fostering agencies.