

Safe Base Fostering Ltd

Safe Base Fostering Ltd
Unit A1 Patrick Tobin Business Park, Manvers, Rotherham,
South Yorkshire S63 7LL
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a privately owned fostering agency. The agency provides long-term, short-term, permanent, respite, emergency and parent and child placements. The agency currently has 12 approved households.

Inspection dates: 8 to 12 May 2017

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: N/A

Overall judgement at last inspection: N/A

Enforcement action since last inspection. None

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Children and young people are treated and respected as individuals. They feel loved and cared for by their foster carers and this provides them with a sense of belonging and being part of the fostering family.
- Stability and the quality of relationships that foster carers provide underpin the progress that children and young people make.
- Foster carers and managers are committed to improving the lives and outcomes for young people. Staff and foster carers are child-focused in their approach.
- Foster carers feel valued and supported by managers. Other professionals recognise their contribution to the overall progress of children and young people. Managers provide ongoing development opportunities for foster carers to increase their skills and improve the care offered to children and young people.
- Managers regularly seek out and take into account the opinions and views of children and young people. The manager and staff act as effective advocates for them, representing their needs and views to other agencies.
- Foster carers feel supported in managing risks that children and young people may face. They offer consistent boundaries and expectations that support children and young people's sense of safety and well-being.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Improve managerial opportunities to analyse and evaluate missing from home incidents. Ensure that return home interviews are recorded consistently and in a manner that promotes more accurate monitoring.
- Clearly record the reasons for the recommendation of foster carer approval in foster panel minutes.
- Executive reports should reflect consideration given to children and young people's welfare.
- Update children and young people's risk assessments following change of circumstances affecting risk.

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

Recommendations

- The panel chair ensures that written minutes of panel meetings are accurate and clearly cover the key issues and views expressed by panel members and record the reasons for its recommendation. (National Minimum Standards, standard 14.6, page 30)

- The manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. (National Minimum Standards, standard 25.2, page 50) In particular, ensure the consistent monitoring of missing from home incidents and subsequent evaluation.
- Where a child goes missing and there is concern for their welfare, or at the request of a child who has been missing, the fostering service arranges a meeting in private between the child and the responsible authority to consider the reasons for their going missing. (National Minimum Standards, standard 5.9, page 16)
- Children's safety and welfare is promoted in all fostering placements. Children are protected from abuse and other forms of significant harm (e.g. sexual or labour exploitation). (National Minimum Standards, standard 4.1, page 14) In particular, that risk assessments are updated to better reflect the risks that young people experience.
- The executive side of the local authority or the independent fostering service's provider/trustees, board members or management committee members monitor the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children. (National Minimum Standards, standard 25, page 51) In particular, that reports from the members reflect this consideration.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people make good progress through living with their foster carers. This is underpinned by the reliable and nurturing care that is offered, with carers providing the warmth and encouragement to make children and young people feel they belong. One young person, commenting on his experiences said: 'I love it here. I wish I'd gone into care ages ago. I feel like I've been with them years. Now I'm looking at a future.'

The quality and strength of relationships that exist between children and young people, their foster carers, staff and managers is a particular strength of the agency. The quality of these relationships ensures that care provided is holistic and well supported. A team approach to caring for children and young people is very much encouraged and promoted.

The manager and staff know children and young people well and this ensures that any difficulties that they might face are quickly identified. In addition, children and young people gain access to additional services when they need them. One social worker considered that the timely intervention of the agency support staff had enabled a young person to settle quickly and prevented a breakdown in the placement. A young person, commenting on the outcome of mentoring organised by the agency, said: 'It's been amazing. I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders.'

Children and young people are encouraged by their carers to explore and develop their strengths, not only in educational settings, but through fun activities that integrate them into the communities in which they live. This supports them in learning to establish and maintain appropriate friendships, as well as learning how to use their leisure time constructively.

Young people are encouraged and offered unfailing support to continue their education and training, in order to prepare them for their futures. When young people's commitment to this falters, foster carers and staff continue to explore alternative resources and opportunities that are better suited to young people's interests.

Carers and staff fully support and encourage children and young people to maintain safe contact with family and friends. This contributes to their sense of identity. Foster carers develop appropriate relationships with birth families and this provides children and young people with a sense of continuity in their lives. Children and young people respond positively to the stability that foster carers provide. This helps children and young people to develop emotional resilience and firm attachments.

Staff actively consult with children and young people and their foster carers. This feedback highlights areas for improvement and those aspects of the service that are successful. This consultation most recently involved inviting all children and young

people to a fun day to help share their thoughts and ideas to improving the children's guide.

The agency ensures that new carers are offered appropriate support and training and are suitably assessed. Regular informal events such as coffee mornings, and formal events such as training, provide a forum for carers to share their experiences and skills with each another.

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

Carers understand the risks that children and young people face and are active in the plans to keep them safe. They understand and follow the reporting procedures when young people go missing. Although some young people do go missing, carers continue to offer consistent, positive relationships to young people and welcome them back, with appropriately expressed concern for their welfare. Other concerns are reported promptly by the carers and suitable advice is sought from staff or other agencies.

Staff do not always record whether young people receive a return home interview from an independent person. In addition, the recording of such is not located in one agreed place, making any omissions difficult to identify. This limits management oversight of this issue and reduces opportunities to provide clear analysis and evaluation of such events.

Suitable training and advice are given to foster carers regarding the dangers of exploitation, abuse and radicalisation. The agency responds promptly to requests for advice and training from carers regarding specific issues and, if necessary, specially commissions this work. One foster carer spoke of how her learning about gang affiliation had improved her awareness and understanding of this issue, and as a result she became more vigilant for any signs of this risk.

Social workers report that carers are honest and open with children and young people with regard to issues that require reporting, and that this is done in a caring way. One social worker noted: 'The carers have shown calm resilience when dealing with "X" [name of child], and some of the potential challenges and risks surrounding his care.' Another social worker said: 'The carers are very good at putting routines in place and reinforcing them.'

Although risk assessments are in place for children and young people, these are not consistently updated to reflect their changing circumstances. This is an administrative oversight and does not affect the welfare and safety of children and young people.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is suitably qualified and experienced. She leads staff who are committed to achieving the best for children and young people, and ensures that high standards of care are maintained. The agency is suitably staffed and there are plans to recruit further staff in order to maintain high levels of support both to carers

and children and young people.

The manager's knowledge of the needs of children and young people, and the strengths of their foster carers, informs and shapes the training that is provided. The ethos within the statement of purpose that, 'quality is driven up through participation and consultation' and, 'the achievements of the organisation are the result of the combined effort of each individual', is evident in the quality of relationships that exist between workers and the foster carers.

Foster carers report high levels of support and say that the manager and workers know both themselves and the children and young people. As a result, advice that is given is specific to the individuals' circumstances and is not generic. Through this support, carers feel valued and emotionally supported. This enables them to provide good nurturing care to children and young people. As a result, children and young people make progress in many areas of their lives. In addition, carers receive regular formal supervision alongside informal support.

Relationships between staff, carers and other professionals are positive and child-focused. Additionally, the manager appropriately challenges other agencies when necessary. One social worker commented: 'The foster carer advocates really well for him and they attend all the meetings.' Another social worker commented: 'I have nothing but positive praise for the foster carers and the agency.'

The manager ensures that procedures are followed as a result of any allegations and that significant events are notified to Ofsted. She appropriately raises any concerns regarding the safety and welfare of children and young people with their placing authorities.

Foster carers reflect a diverse range of backgrounds and life experiences. They are recruited on their abilities to meet the needs of children and young people. The fostering panel provides suitable advice, challenge and scrutiny of applications and assessments to foster. Members of this panel represent a range of expertise and knowledge in order to carry out their function. However, the minutes of the foster panel meetings suggest that the panel has made decisions to approve, as opposed to its function to recommend. In addition, the director's reports on the functioning of the agency do not demonstrate that they are satisfied that the service is achieving good outcomes for children and young people. These shortfalls are administrative and do not affect the welfare of children and young people.

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 difference 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: 1232651

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Inspector

Pauline Yates, social care inspector



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