

Safe Base Fostering Limited

Safe Base Fostering Limited

Unit 1 A The Patrick Tobin Business Park, Manvers, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S63 7LL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Safe Base Fostering Limited is an independent fostering agency. A range of placements are provided, including short-term, long-term, respite and parent and child fostering placements.

At the time of the inspection, there were 45 children living with 29 approved fostering households.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 17 July 2023.

Inspection dates: 7 to 10 May 2024

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: 22 November 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children experience good, well-established relationships with their fostering families. Many of the children have been a part of their fostering family for several years. Foster carers ensure that they get to know the child and their needs from the start of any placement. Children receive good-quality care from foster carers who offer them long-term stability.

Children have a clear sense of belonging. They feel loved and wanted. One child described their fostering family as 'picture perfect', while another child expressed, 'Our [foster] family is like the branches of a tree. The branches grow in different directions, but the roots remain as one.' Some children remain with their fostering families under a staying put arrangement. This offers children additional stability into adulthood.

Family time is promoted. Foster carers show willingness to work with children's birth families. One child described how their family members were invited to the foster carers' caravan, and that they all ate fish and chips together. The child's grandma shared how the foster carers made her 'dreams come true' when they accepted her into their wider family. This has provided the children with positive memories and a strong sense of identity.

Children are helped to stay healthy. Foster carers ensure that children receive routine health checkups and support from specialist health services. Children are supported to eat a healthy diet and are encouraged to try new foods. Many of the children lead very active lives, which supports their physical health and emotional well-being.

Children develop independence skills that include learning how to budget and plan and prepare meals. One child said he was batch cooking in preparation for some time away from home. Children develop confidence in their own abilities. Some older children have part-time jobs, while others look forward to going to university.

Children develop hobbies and interests. Foster carers support children to attend organised activities such as St John Ambulance, football and scuba diving. Children are provided with lots of opportunities for exciting experiences that broaden their horizons. Two children told the inspector about their first holiday abroad with their foster carers and that they had visited several different countries since. Another child attends cadets and has recently been promoted to leader.

Children are making good academic progress with their learning because they receive full-time education and attend consistently. The manager tracks and monitors children's progress in education. This helps her to identify when additional support may be required. However, for one child who had only recently moved into his foster home, the agency did not liaise with the school and, therefore, missed the

child's education meeting. This was a missed opportunity for the agency to better understand the child's educational needs.

Children feel valued and included. Monthly group meetings with family support workers mean that children can share their experiences and influence the support they receive. One foster carer said that her daughter can feel left out when their foster children receive visits from their social worker. The agency ensures that her daughter feels valued and knows they have an important role in supporting their foster siblings.

Children moving into fostering families receive a warm welcome and are helped to settle quickly. Most children receive a well-planned and coordinated move. However, for one child who had lived with six previous foster families, the agency was not curious enough about why the child had been repeatedly moved and it did not evaluate sufficiently whether the carer, who was relatively inexperienced, could meet the child's needs. This child experienced another unplanned ending.

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

Children are safe and happy. They trust their foster carers and know they are listened to. Children develop positive attachments and feel secure in their relationships. One child described that, because their foster carers are always there and don't judge them, they have been able to share their past experiences and get the help they need.

The agency understands risk to children and manages this well. One child was identified to be at risk of exploitation. The manager liaised with the child's foster carers, their social worker and the police. Risk assessments and plans to keep the child safe were put in place. In addition, foster carers and family support workers talk to children about risk and personal safety. One fostering family supported children to understand the impact of social media and the risk of sharing personal information online. Children are learning to keep themselves safe.

There have been no reported incidents of bullying. Foster carers receive training to ensure that they can identify and tackle any form of bullying or discrimination. The agency promotes inclusivity and acceptance.

Allegations about foster carers are well managed. Policies and procedures are in place that help staff and foster carers understand what action to take should a concern arise. Children's views are taken seriously, and the agency liaises with other safeguarding professionals including the local authority designated officer. When serious concerns arise and a move for children cannot be avoided, the managers ensure that children receive sufficient support to settle into their new homes.

When serious incidents occur, the manager notifies the appropriate agencies. However, on two occasions, notifications to the regulator have been delayed. This does not help the regulator to have good oversight of the safeguarding practices of the agency.

Children rarely go missing from home. When children are missing, foster carers act quickly to locate them and report them missing. When one child was located by the police and needed medical assessment, the agency liaised with the police, but did not fully explore the need for the child to have someone with them at hospital that they knew and trusted.

The recruitment and assessment of new carers is thorough. Skilled social workers complete thorough assessments within relevant timescales. There is a strong emphasis on recruiting child-focused carers who can provide safe and loving homes for children. When risks are identified during the assessment process, they are fully explored. The assessment only progresses once the agency is satisfied that potential risks can be mitigated.

Foster carers receive support to understand children's behaviour. This is through training on the agency's model of care, and psychotherapy support is also directly offered. This supports foster carers to use strategies to de-escalate situations and help children to better manage and understand their feelings. As a result, foster carers have not had to physically hold children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is suitably skilled and experienced. She and the responsible individual lead by example and demonstrate high levels of commitment and drive to get it right for fostering families and the children they support.

When concerns about individuals have arisen, the agency has ensured that suitable action is taken. The agency's ambitions to continually develop the service, improve practice and children's experiences have been hindered because the management structure unexpectedly changed. In addition, the agency is not currently fully staffed. This has led to the manager and responsible individual taking on additional responsibilities.

Staff have confidence in the managers leadership skills and look to them for guidance and inspiration. The staff team describes the agency as a 'family who communicate openly', and that mistakes are used as opportunities to learn so they are not repeated. One staff member said, 'I think I'm very lucky to work here and I'm really happy to be a part of this agency.' Another staff member said, 'I am truly humbled to work alongside such amazing colleagues.'

There is effective communication between the managers and team members. Regular meetings and informal discussion support the team's understanding of fostering families and the children in their care. An out-of-hours service provides access to staff and managers should this be needed. Foster carers shared positive experiences of using the out-of-hours service and felt confident they would receive the help they needed by someone who knows and understands them.

The fostering panel functions effectively. The panel chair is well qualified for the role and has significant prior experience in safeguarding children and adults. Panel members are sufficient in number and from diverse backgrounds. The panel process is rigorous and foster carers' strengths and vulnerabilities are identified and explored in full. One panel member spoke of how the continuous professional development opportunities provided by the agency have supported them to advance their career and become a vice panel chair for another organisation.

Foster carer reviews are completed in a timely manner by a reviewing officer independent of the agency. The agency ensures that consultation occurs with children, professionals and the wider fostering family, including adult children.

There has been one complaint about a foster carer. The agency has taken this seriously. They worked alongside the local authority social workers for the children involved to understand the concerns. The foster carer was provided with the right support and training to make the required changes.

The recruitment of staff and panel members is achieved through safer recruitment processes. This means that only staff suitable to work with children do so. Therefore, vacancies are only filled by staff with the right skills, qualities and values. Records are clear and show how decisions relating to recruitment are made.

Foster carer supervision is completed each month by a qualified social worker. Additional single-issue supervisions also take place. Discussions focus on children's needs, their safety and progress, as well as reviewing the foster carer strengths and areas for development. When there are concerns, these are managed sensitively with clear plans to support foster carers. Actions are followed up. This ensures that foster carers continue to develop their skills and understanding.

The agency provides training that is relevant and engaging. Foster carers and staff have access to online learning. Monthly training events are well attended. One recent event was facilitated by a care-experienced person. Foster carers told the inspectors how this had a profound impact on them and has made them consider how they respond to children who are experiencing difficult emotions. The manager reviews the impact of training for foster carers and staff and uses information from supervision and incidents to evaluate training needs for the coming year.

Staff and managers receive supervision in line with the agency's supervision policy. This helps staff to reflect on foster carers' practice, children's needs and their own practice and development. Staff are also given the opportunity to discuss personal matters. The responsible individual and the registered manager receive professional supervision from an independent person with suitable experience.

The statement of purpose and children's guide tell local authorities and children what the agency offers and what they can expect. However, these documents are not routinely updated when changes occur, including staffing changes. In addition, children do not always receive the children's guide at the point they move into their new home.

There are systems in place to help the manager to monitor and evaluate children's experiences and staff practice. In addition, the agency has made good use of external audits and reviews by local authorities and has ensured that actions set are completed in a timely manner. The management team works closely together, sharing information routinely, and this is helping staff to have an up-to-date understanding of the strengths and the areas for development.

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 registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to— the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children placed by the fostering agency, carry on or manage the fostering agency (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill. (Regulation 8 (2)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that when the practice of other professionals is not in line with a child's best interests, that there is strong challenge from the agency to ensure the child's welfare remains paramount. That sufficient information is sought from local authorities and others who know children well and apply professional curiosity to ensure that children's needs are fully understood. That this information is carefully evaluated taking account of the foster carer's skills and experience, before children move in. In addition, to ensure that the agency is aware of and included in any meetings for children.	15 August 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's guide and statement of purpose are kept up to date as staff changes occur. Children should be provided with the children's guide at the point they move in with their fostering families. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards,' 16.1, 16.2)
- The registered person should ensure that notifications are made within 24 hours to appropriate authorities of the occurrence of a significant event. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards,' 29.1)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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

Registered provider: Safe Base Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 1 A, The Patrick Tobin Business Park, Manvers, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S63 7LL

Responsible individual: Michelle Monteiro

Registered manager: Alison Wells

Telephone number: 01709 717901

Email address: alison.wells@safefostering.org.uk

Inspectors

Rachel Walker, Social Care Inspector

Rachel Webster, 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 looked after children, 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.

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 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.

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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024