

# Family Care Fostering

Family Care Fostering Limited

60 School Lane, Bamber Bridge, Preston PR5 6QE

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Family Care Fostering Limited is a privately run fostering agency. It has offices in the North West and the Midlands. The agency offers a range of foster placements including long-term, short-term, emergency and short breaks foster care placements for children up to the age of 18.

At the time of the inspection, the agency was supporting 54 children and 45 fostering households.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in September 2018.

The inspection involved a blended approach of on-site and off-site activity. Children and foster carers were spoken to during the inspection.

### Inspection dates: 10 to 14 October 2022

**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 **requires improvement to be good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 17 September 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are at the centre of this agency. They make good progress in all areas of their lives when living with the agency's foster carers. The progress children make is underpinned by the secure, trusting relationships that they are supported to develop with their foster carers and agency staff.

Children, foster carers and staff feel connected to the agency and say that they are very well supported. One foster carer said, 'We are very happy. We get all the support we need. We feel really lucky to be with Family Care Fostering and to get to look after the children.'

Children are listened to. They are regularly consulted about their care and their views help to influence practice across the agency. Staff and managers provide a range of opportunities for children to enjoy activities and residential events. As a result, managers and staff know the children well and are able to talk to them about issues that are affecting them.

Agency staff and foster carers have high aspirations for children. Children are supported to make good progress in their education. Foster carers support children with school transitions and facilitate opportunities to assist their learning. Further education and employment opportunities are promoted. Carers regularly communicate with education providers, ensuring that any issues are quickly resolved. Children's achievements are celebrated and recognised by their carers and the agency. This helps children to develop a sense of pride in their achievements and promotes positive self-esteem.

Children are welcomed into their foster families. They are helped to develop a sense of belonging and many children continue to benefit from the support of their foster family into adulthood. The agency recognises the importance of keeping families together and a number of children live with their siblings. This helps children to maintain a positive family identity. Children are also helped to keep in touch with people who are important to them.

Foster carers help children to develop age-appropriate life skills in preparation for independence. Where appropriate, children are able to stay with their foster carers post-18. On occasions when this has not been possible, wider foster families have provided opportunities for young adults to live with them.

Children's physical and emotional health needs are supported well. They have access to routine and specialist services as required to ensure that their health needs are being met. At times, the agency has gone above and beyond to ensure that children's medical conditions are understood. Foster carers and staff have access to specialist training to meet children's individual health needs.

Practice across the agency is underpinned by the 'secure base model'. Foster carers and staff benefit from direct access to the organisation's therapist. They are helped to recognise the effect of their own behaviours and to further develop their understanding of children's lived experiences and behaviours. As a result, children's needs are well understood.

Agency staff and foster carers strongly advocate on behalf of the children in their care. They challenge other professionals as required to ensure that decisions are made in children's best interests.

During restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency continued to provide high levels of support to children and families, maintaining regular communication and continuing to see children.

The agency takes action to ensure that children are only placed with carers who are able to meet their needs. However, records do not routinely reflect the matching processes implemented by the agency. Despite efforts to achieve suitably matched placements, there have been occasions when children's placements have ended in an unplanned way. The agency is quick to reflect and learn from these situations with the therapist and social work team.

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

Children say they feel safe living with their foster carers. Their social workers are positive about the care that children receive and recognise the progress that they make.

Foster carers understand children's vulnerabilities and risks. Although the numbers of children who display high-risk behaviours are low, foster carers are vigilant to risk and understand how to respond. However, shortfalls in completing and reviewing risk management plans mean that not all children have plans that reflect their current needs. Detailed discussions take place about how to manage risks but, on occasion, formal documentation has not been completed. This prevents carers from having plans to refer to and limits the agency's oversight of strategies in place to safely manage risks.

Incidents of children going missing are appropriately responded to and the agency take steps to minimise future incidents. When children do go missing, the agency takes action to ensure they are able to speak with someone independent on their return.

Allegations are well managed, with strong oversight from the management team. Effective relationships with other professionals further strengthen safeguarding practices within the organisation. When significant incidents have occurred, the agency works in partnership with other safeguarding agencies, providing ongoing support to children, fostering families and staff and reflecting on and reviewing their practice. Managers complete referrals to other safeguarding agencies as required.

Children are seen regularly by agency staff. Foster carer supervisions reflect appropriate levels of support and challenge to carers. However, shortfalls in the monitoring of unannounced visits have meant that not all carers have received unannounced visits in the expected timescales.

Foster carers know how to respond to children's behaviours. There have not been any physical interventions reported by the agency, and de-escalation training is provided to all carers, with access to more specialist training as required.

Recruitment processes for carers and staff are clear and the agency takes sufficient action to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to safeguard children.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

The manager is held in high regard by children, carers, staff and other professionals. Carers and staff recognise the impact of his leadership and say they continually benefit from his guidance and knowledge. The manager is supported by a practice manager and a responsible individual. Together, they are committed to improving outcomes for children.

The management team knows the children, carers and staff well. However, their oversight is limited, as auditing and monitoring processes are not sufficiently robust. Opportunities to identify shortfalls around records and recording had been missed. This limits their ability to monitor the effectiveness of the service.

Statutory documentation for children who are looked after has not been received for all children and oversight of these gaps is not robust. The agency is taking steps to implement an escalation process to obtain children's plans, but this has not yet been embedded in practice.

Carers and staff have access to a wide range of training opportunities to increase their knowledge base. The agency has taken action to ensure that training remains relevant and interesting.

The fostering panel is effective. Panel members have a wide range of experiences relevant to fostering. However, the agency is taking action to address the lack of panel members from diverse backgrounds, as diversity of panel membership is currently limited. Not all panel members have had their performance appraised annually and one panel member had not signed to accept their performance objectives before sitting on the panel.

Foster carer reviews are completed within timescales and carried out by an independent reviewing officer. However, the decision-making process following some reviews is not sufficiently robust and does not include the rationale for decision-making. On one occasion, a management decision led to a review process not being completed as required by regulation.

Two requirements and five recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. One requirement and two recommendations have not been met and have been restated.

## 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
<p>The fostering service provider must review the approval of each foster parent in accordance with this regulation.</p> <p>When undertaking a review, the fostering service provider must—</p> <p>make such enquiries and obtain such information as they consider necessary in order to review whether the foster parent continues to be suitable to be a foster parent and the foster parent’s household continues to be suitable</p> <p>At the conclusion of the review, the fostering service provider must prepare a written report, setting out whether—</p> <p>the foster parent continues to be suitable to be a foster parent and the foster parent’s household continues to be suitable, and the terms of the foster parent’s approval continue to be appropriate.</p> <p>If the fostering service provider decide, taking into account any recommendation made by the fostering panel, that the foster parent and the foster parent’s household continue to be suitable and that the terms of the foster parent’s approval continue to be appropriate, they must give written notice to the foster parent of their decision.</p> <p>If, taking into account any recommendation made by the fostering panel, the fostering service provider are no longer satisfied that the foster parent or the foster parent’s household continue to be suitable, or that the terms of the approval are appropriate, they must (subject to paragraph 8)</p> <p>—</p> <p>give written notice to the foster parent that they propose to terminate, or (as the case may be) revise the terms of, the foster parent’s approval (a "qualifying determination"),</p>	<p>30 December 2022</p>

<p>together with their reasons and a copy of any recommendation made by the fostering panel. (Regulation 28 (1) (3)(a) (4)(b) (6) (7)(a))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that review processes for foster carers are fully completed prior to any new reviews being conducted.</p>	
<p>The registered person must maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals and improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. (Regulation 35 (1))</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	30 December 2022
<p>The Agency Decision Maker must ensure that in reaching a decision or making a qualifying determination, the decision maker should consider Hofstetter v LB Barnet and IRM. (The Children Act 1989, Volume 4 Guidance and Regulations, Section 5.40)</p>	30 December 2022

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's safety and welfare are promoted in all fostering placements. Specifically, that children's risk assessments contain pertinent information and that these assessments are shared and agreed with their social workers. ('Fostering Service: National Minimum Standards', 4.1.) This recommendation was made at the last inspection and is restated.
- The registered person should ensure that 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. Immediate action should be taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring, specifically, regular auditing of foster carers and children's records. ('Fostering Service: National Minimum Standards', 4.1.) This recommendation was made at the last inspection and is restated.
- The registered person should ensure that each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker who has meetings with the foster carer, including at least one unannounced visit a year. ('Fostering Service: National Minimum Standards', 21.8)
- The registered person should ensure that, as far as is practicable, panel membership reflects the issues under consideration and so should, as appropriate,

be gender balanced and reflect the diversity of the local community. ('The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4', Section 5.8)

- The registered person should ensure that, before appointing any panel member or including them on the central list, the fostering service should inform them in writing of their performance objectives, which should include participation in induction and training, and safeguarding the confidentiality of records and information submitted to the panel. Panel members should sign an acceptance form to record their agreement to these objectives. ('The Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations Volume 4', Section 5.14)
- The registered person should ensure that each panel member's performance, including that of the chair, should be reviewed annually against agreed performance objectives. ('The Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations Volume 4', Section 5.15)

## **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:** SC450903

**Registered provider:** Family Care Fostering Limited

**Registered provider address:** Family Care Fostering Ltd, 60 School Lane, Bamber Bridge, Preston PR5 6QE

**Responsible individual:** Andrew O'Reilly

**Registered manager:** David Barrow

**Telephone number:** 01772 647500

**Email address:** [fostering@family-care.co.uk](mailto:fostering@family-care.co.uk)

## Inspectors

Caroline Bertram, Social Care Inspector  
Sarah Oldham, 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 children looked after, 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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022