

Integrated Services Programme

ISP

Integrated Services Programme, 9 Church Street, CHESHAM, Buckinghamshire HP5 1HS

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

First registered in July 2006, Integrated Services Programme (also known as ISP Chesham) is an independent fostering agency complemented by specialist teams in education, therapy and social work. It is part of the wider ISP group, which is part of the wider Partnerships in Children's Services (known as PICS) group which operates fostering services across the country.

Integrated Services Programme (ISP Chesham) provides fostering placements, education and therapy for children and young people whose development has been impaired by abuse, trauma and deprivation. It has adopted an attachment-based known as the Secure Base model.

Inspection dates: 1 to 5 October 2018

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: 16 March 2015

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Children with very complex histories are safe and feel safe in their placements.
- Children are well supported in education and they are attending and achieving there.
- Children make progress in coming to terms with their past experiences. Their behaviour improves and their life chances increase as they respond to well-considered nurturing.
- Foster carers are dedicated and well trained for their roles and embrace children as additional members of their families.
- The panel is constituted of people from diverse and relevant backgrounds. It works well. Other internal monitoring processes are effective.
- Although there is currently no registered manager in place, effective arrangements are ensuring that the service remains well managed.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- The children's guide is not yet accessible to non-readers.
- Independence plans for children who may soon be leaving the service are not well developed.
- Approval of all foster carers for children aged 0 to 18 is not underpinned by bespoke evidence of each carer's ability to meet the needs of such a wide age range.

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 provider must— keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the children’s guide. (Regulation 4(a)) In particular, ensure that information is available in other formats for children who require this.</p>	<p>12 December 2018</p>

Recommendations

- Foster carers contribute to the development of each child’s care plan, in collaboration with the child, including the pathway plan for an ‘eligible’ child, and work collaboratively with young person’s social worker or personal adviser in implementing the plan. (NMS. 12.2) In particular, ensure that young people have their independence skills assessed and transition plans in place.
- Prospective foster carers are considered in terms of their capacity to look after children in a safe and responsible way that meets the child’s development needs. (NMS 13.6) In particular, assessments of foster carers evidence how they will meet the needs of children and young people when approved for 0 to 18 years.
- Entries in records, decisions and reasons for them, are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising, distinguish between fact, opinion and third-party information and are signed and dated. (NMS 26.5)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children in this service are happy and openly discuss their positive experiences of living with foster carers. Children say they are treated with respect and as part of their foster carers' families, and this provides them with security. Children thrive, as they quickly learn to trust their foster carers.

Inclusion in the wider family of the foster carers is a theme that is wide spread throughout the agency for children. Children feel accepted on all levels, which leads to positive experiences. Children and young people participate in family outings, undertake activities and have their accomplishments celebrated by the agency and foster carers.

Children's voices are important and listened to. Foster carers ensure that children's views are known, and they challenge anyone who ignores them. If children's wishes can't be accommodated, foster carers carefully explain to children why they can't.

Children are placed with foster carers who are trained and properly prepared by the agency. Training provides foster carers with all the essential skills needed to confidently care for the children they look after.

Children experience good health. Their health and well-being are consistently promoted and monitored by their foster carers and tracked by the agency. Children are promptly registered with health professionals when they move to live with their foster carers. Children attend all routine and emergency appointments with the support of their foster carers.

The therapeutic support available to children is well received and valued. Children gain a better understanding of their emotional difficulties by attending regular meetings with the agency therapist. Several children were able to share insight into how therapy has provided them with coping strategies to overcome previous negative behaviours.

Many children and young people are in mainstream schools or colleges; others are in alternative provisions that specifically meet their needs. Children make good progress and have good attendance in school. The three education coordinators attached to the agency monitor children's progress. In addition, the coordinators attend personal education plan meetings, communicate with education professionals and provide support and guidance to foster carers.

Many young people develop appropriate skills for adulthood. Many are supported by their foster carers to budget, and perform everyday tasks, such as laundry, cooking and travelling. Unfortunately, some young people over the age of sixteen have experienced delay in having their independence skills assessed. For these young people, there was no formal transition plan that contained young people's views and those of their foster carers.

Children are supported to retain and understand their individual culture and identities. Foster carers support formal and informal arrangements, which enable children to spend time with birth family members and others who are significant to them, if this is appropriate. Many foster carers have adopted the motto 'as well as, not instead of' that helps children know that they are not trying to replace the people the children hold dear in their lives. A good example of this is parents of a child amicably having Christmas dinner with their child and foster parents. The child was able to see adults in his life engaging positively with each other and that his placement is approved by his biological family.

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

Foster carers understand and give the highest priority to keeping children safe. The children placed with the agency are protected very well from concerns that may have a negative impact their well-being. Foster carers and staff have a clear understanding of the agency's safeguarding protocols and routinely adhere to them. The low number of significant or untoward events that occurred in the three-year period prior to this inspection is a true reflection of the agency's commitment to keeping children safe.

The agency has established extensive professional links that assist in safeguarding children. Supervising social workers and foster carers have good communication with professionals, who meet regularly when concerns arise for children. The professional networks established have been a key component in keeping children safe.

The ability to understand and minimise the risk associated with the children in their care is a strength of the foster carers. They can talk through concerns and actions that need to be taken when risk is present for a child. The foster carers are supported by risk assessments that give them guidance, but they are not wholly reliant on these; they proactively use their established relationships and knowledge of children to promote change in behaviours.

Supervising social workers use innovative methods when working with children who have a history of self-harm. Strategies are created by the professional network based on the input of children. Some affected children have now experienced prolonged periods of abstaining from harming themselves due to their new insight into the cause of their behaviour.

Missing from care incidents are managed proportionately by foster carers. Foster carers correctly distinguish the difference between young people going missing or when they are simply late to return. This practice prevents unnecessary police contact for young people.

Only one foster carer had to be de-registered since the last inspection. The managers robustly handled the matter by using a process that ensured that children were safe and foster carers understood why concerns were raised for their suitability. The foster carers were provided with support independent from the agency and had the opportunity to be heard during the process. In this instance, the case was promptly reviewed at panel and de-registration recommended and agreed

with by the agency decision maker.

The agency promotes safe placements for children by undertaking unannounced visits twice yearly. Health and safety checks are monitored and reviewed consistently. Data barring checks are undertaken for the children of foster carers when they turn 18 and for anyone who is a frequent visitor to any placement.

Safe recruitment practices are in place that prevent individuals who could potentially be harmful to children from gaining employment. The agency reviews all background information for accuracy and obtains the appropriate references. This includes newly recruited carers and staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager position has been vacant since the previous manager resigned in July 2018. An interim manager was appointed. However, he decided against applying for registration. The senior managers are in the process of appointing someone to fill the vacancy permanently.

A strength of the agency is the highly skilled staff who work directly with children and foster carers. Supervising social workers and fostering advisers are passionate and committed to ensuring that the best outcomes are achieved for children, while maintaining professional boundaries with foster carers and establishing very constructive relationships with them. The same can be said of the fostering advisers who offer an additional resource that the foster carers can identify with. All are very child-focused.

The agency works effectively with external agencies including placing authorities. The manager has been quick to challenge any decisions the local authority may make on the behalf of the children which may not in their best interest. When challenging, the manager has offered alternative solutions that may better suit the children and provide the best opportunity for them to remain safe and achieve.

The manager has developed an effective system of monitoring the progress and the care that the young people receive. The staff complete daily, weekly and monthly forms that allows the manager to identify the strengths and areas of improvement. The information is compiled into a larger report and shared with the head of care. This provides senior management with an accurate view of the service from which a development plan easily arises.

The newly updated statement of purpose clearly lays out the services and support available to young people, policies and information about the staff and their experience. The children's guide is provided to all the young people and contains information about their rights and responsibilities. However, it is not currently adapted for children who have additional communication needs.

Records are well-maintained; the organisation uses the CHARMS system that allows remote access to records. Minor issues of stigmatising language were noted in a small number of records. Managers were aware of this, but will need to avoid

recurrence to ensure that records are suitable for subsequent access by children.

The panel is generally a real strength of the service. It offers good scrutiny and challenge to decisions made. However, the use of blanket age approvals for foster carers (that is, to take children from age 0 to 18) is widespread without always having clear evidence that the foster carer is able and familiar with the needs of the entire age span.

There have been few complaints in this inspection period and these have been dealt with effectively and promptly. Records evidence that complainants feel heard and agree with the actions taken to resolve the matter. The manager addresses each issue raised with a comprehensive response while maintaining communication throughout.

Foster carers feel well supported by this agency; they value the training they receive and the support of the agency. They say that they feel part of wider family with this agency.

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: SC067361

Registered provider: Isp

Registered provider address: Partnerships In Childcare Services Ltd, Wavendon Tower, Ortensia Drive, Wavendon, Milton Keynes MK17 8LX

Responsible individual: Tracy Livesey

Registered manager: post vacant

Telephone number: 01795 428097

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Inspector

James Harmon, social care inspector



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