

Isp Rainham

Integrated Services Programme, The Old Church, High Street, Rainham, Gillingham
ME8 8AY

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a privately owned independent fostering agency registered with Ofsted in September 2017. The company is part of a much larger organisation, Polaris Community, comprising several independent fostering agencies.

There is a strong focus on therapeutic parenting. Foster carers provide long-term, short-term, respite and permanent care placements. The fostering service also provides placements to children with disabilities, as well as parent and child placements.

At the time of the inspection, there were 41 approved fostering households, caring for 53 children and two parents. Of the 53, two are in staying put arrangements.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 12 September 2017.

Inspection dates: 29 January to 2 February 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 October 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 receive care from foster carers committed to the children's growth and development. Foster carers provide individualised care that is specific to the children's needs. Foster carers know the children well and show clear dedication to their needs. As a result, children benefit from homes in which they feel safe, settled, and secure.

The agency staff match the children well with carers who can meet their needs. They involve foster carers and other children in the household in the matching process. The agency staff consider the needs, views, and wishes of all the children to enable a positive and successful match.

There are elements of exceptional practice in this fostering service. This includes the dual support that foster carers and children receive from supervising social workers and fostering advisers. Fostering advisers provide an extra tier of emotional and social support to foster carers and children. The fostering advisers work well together with supervising social workers to enhance the practice of foster carers. Additionally, the service has accreditation in inclusive communication which further supports the communication needs of anyone accessing the service.

The agency staff build good relationships with partner professionals, children, and parents. Partner professionals are positive about how staff and carers work with them. One professional said, 'They [the agency staff] have all been really good and efficient. It makes my job easier.'

Staff and carers support the children to have time with their family and those who are important to them. Foster carers support parents to remain part of their children's lives. They build positive relationships with them and work together in the best interests of the child. For instance, one carer has developed an excellent, relaxed relationship with a parent. This has helped the child to be more settled living with the carer.

Agency staff provide foster carers with good support to enhance children's progress. The consistent, good-quality input from agency staff regarding children's health, education and emotional well-being is effective. There is strong support from the well-established therapy team. This enables children to receive trauma-informed support that enhances their emotional and mental health. The agency education adviser ensures that children's education is championed. Additionally, the adviser works with schools to deliver trauma informed education training to staff.

Children have good opportunities to share their views, wishes and feelings. Staff and foster carers involve them in decisions and plans that affect them. Children know and exercise their rights. The activities that the service and carers provide ensures positive experiences for children. Children enjoy agency social events that provide them with opportunities to meet new people and build friendships. The monthly

evening 'Chill and chat' sessions are popular with children. This is an opportunity for them to socialise in a relaxed and enjoyable way with children who may have similar lived experiences.

Foster carers support children to develop their confidence and prepare them for their future. They help children prepare and plan for the time when they will move on. Foster carers use the services Life Skills programme to support children's independence. The service acknowledges their progress with gifts, such as vouchers and cards. Staff recognise the limitations of services and support provided for children when they reach 18. One agency staff member is currently working on a project to raise awareness of this and the support available.

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

Good safeguarding arrangements are in place. Staff and foster carers know what to do when they have concerns about the welfare of a child. Children feel safe in the care of their foster carers. One child said, 'I am very, very happy here.' Children know that if they have worries or are upset about something, they can tell their carers or another trusted adult.

Staff and foster carers have a good understanding of risk and work to ensure that children are safe. Clear risk assessments and safer care plans provide a good basis for understanding the management of each child's safety. Staff regularly review these plans to ensure that they remain up to date.

Foster carers understand the importance of providing clear and consistent boundaries for children and that these help children to feel safe and secure. Foster carers receive specialist training to prepare them for the management of risks and behaviours that challenge.

Foster carers know what to do when children go missing from home. They work with a range of professionals to ensure the children's safe return. The agency staff ensure that concerns about children who go missing are well known and managed effectively through professional network meetings.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is ambitious for the service. She has high expectations for what children can achieve. She ensures that the agency employs supervising social workers and foster carers who can meet the needs of the children well. Where children have specific or emerging needs, foster carers receive specialist training to meet these needs.

Leaders and managers provide a range of programmes and services to support foster carers. For example, the continued growth of the education adviser role has meant that foster carers have greater understanding of children's learning needs and the support they need. Children and foster carers have access to effective

therapeutic support, which enables them to understand children's behaviours as well as support their own resilience.

Foster carers have positive experiences of assessments and reviews. Assessments of applicant's suitability to foster are strong. The effective panel process is a strength of the service. Reviews of foster carers continuing suitability are of a high standard.

The registered manager ensures a strong supportive environment for her staff team. As a result, staff are positive about working at this agency. Staff receive regular reflective supervision, good training, and support. Foster carers receive good-quality training. The introduction of the new therapeutic pathway training helps foster carers and staff to reflect on specific situations. This training was developed at this service and subsequently rolled out to other services in the group. It has been well received by foster carers and staff.

Leaders and managers have good oversight of the service and monitor children's progress effectively. They recognise the strengths and areas for development in the agency. Any shortfalls in staff practice, safeguarding incidents and complaints are managed well. The manager is committed to identifying lessons learned to improve practice. For example, following a significant safeguarding concern, the manager identified the need for additional training around professional curiosity and rolled this out to foster carers and staff.

Leaders and managers role model positive approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion. They recognise festivals of different religions. They send cards and gifts celebrating Eid or Chinese New Year. They ensure that foster carers support the needs of children around their ethnicity or culture. Plans are in place to take some children to their country of origin to meet extended family and develop a better understanding of their background.

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: 1263501

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Inspector

Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector

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