

Fostering North East

St Cuthbert's Care

St Cuthbert's House, West Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 7PY

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency is owned and managed by a charitable organisation. The agency provides long-term, short-term, emergency and respite placements. It currently provides placements for 19 children and young people in 16 approved caring households.

Inspection dates: 7 to 10 January 2019

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: 2 June 2015

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- The children and young people are progressing well in stable placements, where they have developed excellent attachments to their carers.
- The foster carers receive comprehensive and responsive support from the agency staff to enable them to cope with the challenges of fostering.
- Children and young people in placement are kept safe through the proactive safeguarding practice of supervising social workers and carers. The staff provide comprehensive information to carers about the ways in which to manage any risks to the children and young people. The carers understand these risks and follow the protocols in children and young people's plans.
- The staff team, supported by the responsible individual, works collaboratively to ensure that the carers continue to receive the support they need in order to maintain stable placements in the absence of a registered manager.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- The agency does not have a permanent registered manager in place.
- The agency has not submitted an updated statement of purpose or children's guide to HMCI.
- The agency has not submitted its missing from care policy and procedure to the local police for agreement to ensure that it complies with local protocols.
- The agency staff have not obtained the most up-to-date care planning documentation from placing local authorities.
- In order to inform the quality of care, the registered provider needs to ensure that the feedback obtained from the children and young people, their carers, professionals and any other significant people in their lives is used to improve practice. Any review of the quality of care must be submitted to HMCI.
- The foster carers' personal development plans do not detail the specific training and development which carers will undertake and how the agency will support them to do this.

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—</p> <p>keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and children’s guide,</p> <p>notify the Chief Inspector of any such revision within 28 days. (Regulation 4(a)(b))</p>	31/01/2019
<p>The fostering service provider must ensure that, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child, and in particular that each foster parent is provided with a copy of the most recent version of the child’s care plan provided to the fostering service provider under regulation 6(3)(d) of the Care Planning Regulations. (Regulation 17(3))</p> <p>Specifically, to ensure that the most up-to-date care planning documentation is received, placed on file and provided to carers.</p>	28/02/2019
<p>The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a policy, which is agreed with the local police, setting out—</p> <p>the measures to be followed to prevent children placed with foster parents from going missing from their placement, and</p> <p>the procedure to be followed when a child is missing from a foster parent’s home without permission.</p> <p>Specifically, to consult and agree the missing from care policy and protocol with the local police. (Regulation 13 (3)(a)(b))</p>	31/03/2019

<p>The registered person must maintain a system for— improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.</p> <p>The registered person must provide the Chief Inspector with a written report in respect of any review conducted for the purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to any local authority.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority). (Regulation 35 (1)(b)(2))</p>	<p>31/05/2019</p>
---	-------------------

Recommendations

- Foster carers’ personal development plans set out how they will be supported to undertake ongoing training and development that is appropriate to their development needs and experience. (NMS 20.5)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The foster carers and the agency staff are child-focused in their approach. Living in the agency's foster placements enhances the life chances of the children and young people. They experience considerable security and stability in their foster homes, with the majority of placements being long term. Young people have the opportunity to 'stay put' when they reach the age of 18 years.

Strong information sharing, including placement planning meetings, between children and young people's social workers and the fostering team aids effective matching. Foster carers learn about the children and young people's needs directly from the social worker, and have their queries answered before they progress to placement. The supervising social workers' comprehensive knowledge of the carers helps them to secure appropriate matches with children and young people. A carer said, 'They set you up for success.'

The children and young people receive appropriate information, including the children's guide, prior to placement. Wherever possible, planned introductions ensure that the children and young people are familiar with their new carers and home before moving in.

The agency prioritises education and training for its children and young people, with all of the children and young people successfully engaging in full-time education or training.

The health needs of the children and young people are met through timely action by their carers. The children and young people benefit from therapy to address their emotional health where necessary. One child has lost a significant amount of weight and had extensive dental work. His social worker described his progress as 'an amazing transformation'.

The children and young people enjoy family life, which includes access to a range of activities and community resources. Children and young people enjoy holidays with their foster carers. These opportunities help to enhance their self-esteem and they grow in confidence. In addition, foster carers, children and young people have regular opportunities to meet up with other fostering families. They enjoy fun days out with staff from the agency, such as the pantomime, and outings to local attractions. This has helped to build positive and supportive relationships across the agency and fostering households.

Carers and supervising social workers actively promote children and young people's relationships with their birth families, if appropriate. One carer has had her terms of approval changed so that a child could join her two siblings in placement.

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

The children and young people are protected through effective planning between the carers, agency social workers and children and young people's social workers. The carers know about the individual risks to the children and young people, and what action to take to reduce these. They are supported in this by detailed and clear risk management plans. The risks to the children and young people have reduced since they have been in placement.

The assessment and preparation of prospective foster carers is thorough and timely. Assessments explore the applicant's capacity to parent and maintain a focus on safeguarding. All the necessary checks have been undertaken. This ensures that only those with the ability to parent safely have proceeded to approval.

No children and young people currently go missing from placement. If an incident occurs, the carers are supported by clear procedures to follow. Any behaviour that may suggest the occurrence of child sexual or criminal exploitation results in information being passed to the placing social worker immediately.

The children and young people develop a strong sense of security with their carers. They feel protected and safe from harm within their foster families. A young person said, 'I am safe here, it is like a proper home.'

The carers are skilled at de-escalating behaviour and do not use any physical intervention to manage the behaviour of the children and young people. None of the children or young people have problematic substance misuse. The carers are helped to keep the children and young people safe from risks that may be posed by the internet through training and guidance found in their individual safer caring policy.

Allegations are dealt with in a timely manner. The acting manager shares information with the appropriate agencies and immediate action is taken to protect children and young people. Where practice concerns are identified, the acting manager ensures that a review or reassessment of the carer is undertaken. This enables clear recommendations to be made to enhance care practice or for carers to be de-registered in the interests of children and young people.

The agency promotes safe care through undertaking unannounced visits and speaking to foster children alone. Health and safety checks in the home are undertaken annually.

The agency ensures that the children and young people are cared for by individuals who have the knowledge and skills to keep them safe. All carers and staff are required to undertake safeguarding training, which is regularly updated.

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

The agency does not have a registered manager in place currently. The agency is taking appropriate steps to address this. It has also recently recruited a senior

supervising social worker. The small staff team, supported effectively by the responsible individual, is ensuring that there has been no detrimental impact on the experiences or safety of the children and young people.

The requirement and recommendations made at the last inspection are met.

The agency has undertaken very little recruitment of new carers. However, it remains financially viable through the support of the wider charitable organisation which owns it. Staffing levels are sufficient to provide carers with supportive supervision and access to 24-hour support.

The agency has failed to provide HMCI with an updated version of the agency's statement of purpose or children's guide. This prevents effective scrutiny and monitoring.

The staff team continues to receive constructive and regular supervision and performance appraisal from the responsible individual during the absence of a registered manager and the induction of the senior social worker. The social workers feel well supported and work together closely to meet the needs of the carers to maintain placement stability. Placement breakdown is infrequent as a result.

In some cases, the carers do not receive the most recent care planning documentation relating to their children and young people. The staff have not been effective in challenging placing authorities to provide the necessary documentation. This could result in the care of children and young people being based on out-of-date information.

The foster carers feel well supported by the agency staff. They have not felt any impact from the recent staff turnover, with their supervision continuing consistently. They describe the supervising social workers as 'doing nothing but helping you' and 'totally stepping up to the mark'.

The agency has a system in place for monitoring the matters required. Consultation is also undertaken with carers and children and young people. However, this information is not being used sufficiently to review the service and identify areas for development. The registered person has not submitted a report to HMCI detailing this information as required.

The quality of the care provided to the children and young people is regularly monitored by the agency by thorough annual reviews. However, the resulting personal development plans lack detail. They do not identify how the staff will support carers to achieve their continuing professional development so that they continue to meet the needs of the children and young people effectively.

The agency's central list of fostering panel members brings a range of experience to the panel. The fostering panel provides scrutiny of the applications and reviews that are presented.

The agency decision-maker conducts her role in a professional and timely manner.

She provides a comprehensive rationale for her decisions using relevant information.

Carers and social workers are supported to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care through an appropriate training and development programme. The carers are also provided with training around the specific needs of the children and young people they have in placement where relevant.

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: SC033542

Registered provider: St Cuthbert's Care

Registered provider address: St Cuthbert's House, West Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 7PY

Responsible individual: Sheila Errington

Registered manager: Post vacant

Telephone number: 0191 228 0111

Email address: sheila.errington@stcuthbertscare.org.uk

Inspector:

Janet Black, 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.

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 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 2019