

Diagrama Fostering

Diagrama Children's Services Limited
Airport House, Purley Way CR0 0XZ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The provider is a registered charity which operates several children's services across Europe. This independent fostering agency provides the full range of fostering placements, including foster to adopt. At the time of the inspection, the agency had 21 approved fostering households and 12 children placed with them.

The registered manager has been registered since 28 April 2016. She also manages the organisation's adoption service.

Inspection dates: 4 to 8 February 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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 12 February 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Leaders and managers have created a highly supportive working environment that encourages high professional standards, learning, reflection and professional curiosity.
- Leaders and managers ensure that all decisions are made in the best interests of children and young people.
- The fostering and adoption panel is strong and contributes effectively to the agency's quality assurance processes.
- Leaders, managers and staff advocate well for children and young people within the network of professionals.
- Safeguarding concerns are managed well.
- The practices around recruitment of staff and approval of foster carers are sound.
- Foster carers said they felt valued, respected and supported by the agency.
- The matching procedure is thorough and results in stable placements.
- Children and young people receive high-quality care from skilled and genuinely caring foster carers.
- Children and young people make good progress in many areas of their lives and develop feelings of security, trust and belonging.
- Children's and young people's confidence, self-esteem, communication and social skills continue to improve.
- Children and young people benefit from healthy lifestyles.
- Children and young people have high levels of school attendance and make good progress in their learning.
- Children and young people enjoy participating in a wide range of recreational opportunities and achieve greater social integration.
- Foster carers promote children's and young people's relationships with their birth families.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Individual risk assessments are not always updated when children's and young people's needs and circumstances change.
- Foster carers do not receive clear information about delegated authority.
- Assessments of prospective foster carers do not include evidence of discussions with birth children about the arrangements for them to share bedrooms.
- Not all foster carers have an up-to-date personal development plan.

- Staff appraisals are not always completed on an annual basis.
- Annual monitoring reports are not sent to Ofsted in a timely manner.

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Children's safety and welfare is promoted in all fostering placements. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 4.1)

Specifically, the registered person should ensure that children's individual risk assessments are updated on a regular basis and when their needs or circumstances change.

- Foster carers understand what decisions about contact are delegated to them, in line with the child's care plan, and make those decisions in the child's best interests. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 9.7)

Specifically, the registered person should ensure that effective processes are in place for the delegation of authority to foster carers in relation to children who are placed with them.

- 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. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 13.6)

Specifically, this relates to the assessment of foster carers' accommodation. The registered person should ensure that the assessment of prospective foster families includes evidence of discussions with their birth children about them sharing bedrooms.

- 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. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 20.5)

Specifically, the registered person should ensure that each foster carer has a personal development plan and that this plan is reviewed on a regular basis.

- All staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and, where they are working with children, this appraisal takes into account any views of children the service is providing for. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 24.6)

- 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 is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 25.2)

Specifically, the registered person should ensure that Ofsted receives monitoring reports on an annual basis and in a timely manner.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people have positive experiences. They feel safe and have good opportunities to resolve any issues from their past that might be holding back their development. Children and young people move on in their lives and improve their life chances. One young person talked about turning her life around with the support from foster carers.

Foster carers have a good understanding of trauma and are able to form positive relationships with children and young people regardless of the traumatic experiences that they have had. One young person said that living with her foster family is the best thing that has happened to her.

Children and young people receive high-quality care. They receive individualised support from skilled and genuinely caring foster carers. Children and young people have their needs met and make good progress in many areas of their lives.

The agency's matching procedure is thorough and results in stable placements. Introductions of children and young people with their foster families are managed sensitively. In one case, when a young person made an introductory visit to a foster family, she did not want to leave. She said that this was because the foster family had made her feel welcomed and understood.

Children and young people develop feelings of security, trust and belonging. These feelings enhance their self-esteem and confidence. A nursery manager commented how a foster child with special needs blended easily with other children, developed friendships with them and settled well within weeks of starting the nursery.

Foster carers are attentive towards children and young people. They listen carefully to what children and young people say or express in other ways. Having their views and feelings respected increases children's and young people's motivation to communicate. Improved engagement and better communication skills underpin the progress that children and young people have made in many areas of their lives.

Children and young people enjoy healthy lifestyles. Foster carers provide children and young people with nutritious food and encourage them to exercise and lead active lives. Examples of excellent progress include a young person who has achieved a more healthy weight, and malnourished children whose weight is improving.

Foster carers ensure that children and young people access health services and receive the help that they need to maintain good physical and mental health. The agency works closely with health professionals to ensure the well-being of children and young people.

The agency places great importance on education and learning. All children and

young people are in formal education and their school attendance is high. They make good progress in their learning. One young person achieved good grades, having not been in education for eight months prior to coming to this agency.

Children and young people participate in a wide range of recreational opportunities, such as arts and crafts, walking, bike-riding and swimming. They access places of cultural interest and enjoy holidays in this country and abroad. Consequently, children and young people have fun, develop their social skills and achieve better social integration.

Foster carers promote children's and young people's relationships with their birth families. One social worker commented that foster carers did a magnificent piece of work with a birth family to empower the birth family to have better contact with their child.

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

Effective arrangements are in place to protect children and young people. Staff and foster carers follow good safeguarding practices in their work. Safeguarding concerns are managed well.

Children and young people are safe. Children and young people who used to go missing, self-harm or engage in sexually harmful behaviours towards others, have stopped such unsafe behaviours.

Close relationships between children and young people and their foster carers underpin good safeguarding. One young person said that she felt comfortable talking with her foster carers about anything. She said: 'I used to hate going home. I was on the streets and not going to school. I now love spending time at home with my foster carers and go to school regularly.'

Staff and foster carers have a good understanding of risks that impact on the welfare of children and young people. They receive training on a wide range of safeguarding topics, such as: children missing from education or care, human trafficking and modern slavery, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, radicalisation, female genital mutilation and other forms of so-called honour-based violence. Staff are provided with up-to-date written guidance and follow it carefully when responding to safeguarding concerns.

Good partnership working enhances the safety of children and young people. Staff ensure that children and young people receive multi-disciplinary support that helps them to be safer. An example of this is how staff and foster carers worked with the police to protect a child with suspected involvement in sexual exploitation.

An incident that happened on 30 May 2017 led to a serious case review. The incident involved two children. One of them was a foster child and the other child was on a special guardianship order. Since that incident, the agency has increased the focus on the needs and vulnerabilities of each child and adult within the fostering household. The risk assessment practices have become more proactive,

holistic and dynamic.

An effective risk assessment process forms an intrinsic part of the agency's robust matching procedures. At the point of accepting a placement, staff develop individual risk assessments and individual safe-care plans for each child or young person and for the whole fostering household. Supervising social workers talk regularly with foster carers about strategies to promote children's and young people's safety and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies.

However, the risk management plans are not always reviewed formally when there are changes. In one case, when another child joined a fostering household that already had a child with an identified risk of peer-on-peer abuse living there, this did not trigger a formal review of the risk assessments/management plans for everybody in that household. Although the agency has learned from the serious incident and improved the risk management process, the best practices are not embedded.

Foster carers understand the underlying causes of challenging behaviours. They provide clear boundaries that help children and young people to develop a sense of security and safety. Living in positive family environments helps children and young people to express their difficult feelings in more constructive ways, such as through rigorous physical activity and creative pursuits. An example of this is a moving poem that a child wrote about his feelings. The agency has arranged for him to make a musical recording of this poem in a professional studio.

The agency has an effective procedure for dealing with allegations against foster carers. A foster carer who was a subject of an allegation said how this experience, albeit difficult, convinced her that the agency always put safeguarding of children and young people first.

The agency's practices around the recruitment of staff and approval of foster carers safeguard children and young people. The assessments of prospective carers are usually thorough and insightful. However, in one case, the assessment lacked evidence that the agency ascertained the views of four birth children about sharing two bedrooms, either before or after their fostering approval.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The agency's charitable ethos is shared across all levels of the organisation. Leaders, managers and staff are ambitious about what children and young people can achieve. They have genuine motivation to help children and young people to live better lives and fulfil their potential. Leaders, managers and staff ensure that all decisions are made in the best interests of children and young people.

An experienced and competent registered manager runs the agency in line with regulations and good fostering practices. A strong and stable team of social workers provides consistently high-quality support to foster carers. The team of social workers works seamlessly with the agency's administration team to achieve efficient running of the agency in line with its statement of purpose. The relationships

between teams are excellent and one staff member described the administration team as the backbone of the agency.

Leaders and managers have created a highly supportive working environment that encourages reflection and professional curiosity. Staff receive regular high-quality supervision. They said that they felt highly supported and 'held' by the registered manager. They talked about the positive impact of this on their ability to support foster carers.

Foster carers talked positively about the support that they receive from the agency and from their supervising social workers. They said that the agency is always there for them. Foster carers said that they always felt valued and respected by the agency.

Leaders and managers are committed to creating a learning culture within the agency. The registered manager keeps staff informed about current research findings and encourages discussions about the impact of these findings on the agency's practices. An example is the registered manager's own research on the effectiveness of reunifications with families.

Staff and foster carers have access to a comprehensive training programme, which includes face-to-face and online training opportunities. All foster carers achieve training support and development standards within their first year of approval. Their approval is subject to annual reviews and they talk regularly with their supervising social workers about training and learning. However, not all foster carers have a written personal development plan. Some supervising social workers' appraisals are overdue.

Leaders, managers and staff advocate well for children and young people. When necessary, they challenge other services to do what is best for children and young people. However, the good joint working around planning of care does not always extend to having clear agreements with the placing authorities about what decisions can be delegated to foster carers and the agency.

Leaders and managers carefully monitor the progress that children and young people are making. Quarterly monitoring reports capture a wealth of information and show good analysis of data. However, monitoring reports are not sent to Ofsted in a timely manner, which undermines Ofsted's ability to monitor the agency.

The agency's fostering and adoption panel makes a strong and effective contribution to quality assuring the agency. The panel minutes are detailed and explain clearly the reasons for the recommendations being made. The agency's decision maker is a highly experienced social work leader, who is independent from the agency.

Leaders and managers are realistic in their self-evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the agency. They are taking actions to address the weaknesses that are identified in this report. An example of this is that staff appraisals have been scheduled to take place in February 2019. None of the weaknesses identified in this report have had an observable negative impact on children and young people.

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: SC484575

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Inspector

Seka Graovac, social care inspector



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