

# 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 fostering to adopt.

At the time of the inspection, the agency had 12 children in foster placement with 15 Diagrama foster carers. Two of the children are in fostering to adopt placements.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 17 March 2023. They also manage the organisation's adoption service.

### Inspection dates: 24 to 28 April 2023

**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:** 4 February 2019

**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 have positive and secure relationships with the adults who care for them. Foster carers demonstrate a high level of care and commitment to children, who they view as 'part of the family'. One foster carer said that the child was with them 'for life'.

Children live in stable family environments with experienced and nurturing foster carers who know them well. Consequently, foster carers can meet children's specific needs. Children who are of a different race and cultural background to their carers have their needs promoted well. For one child, this is through positive and regular communication and visits with birth family. For another child, the agency has identified a culturally appropriate advocate. Children consequently thrive and make good progress in their health, social and emotional development.

Foster carers and supervising social workers collaborate well with schools and social care to ensure that children meet their educational targets. Where foster carers and supervising social workers identify barriers to learning, they take swift action to resolve matters. One child felt that their school was treating them unfavourably due to their race, which made it difficult for them to remain on the premises on certain days. Foster carers, the supervising social worker and the child's social worker immediately addressed this with the school.

Children have opportunities to participate in a range of family activities, such as family outings, going for meals, and holidays. Foster carers promote children's interests and hobbies, such as swimming, cycling and rock climbing. This helps children to develop their skills and confidence physically and socially.

Leaders and managers seek children's views and listen to them. Staff have made considerable progress in gathering information about the experiences of children as part of foster carer reviews. One young person said that their foster carers are 'making me the man I am today', and another said, 'They are just the best'. The registered manager plans to develop a children's counsel and involve children in developing questions for prospective carers at the fostering panel.

Foster carers help children to maintain relationships with their family and friends. Foster carers understand the importance of children seeing those who are important to them, but also appreciate how this may make children feel anxious. Foster carers help children to manage the different feelings that they may have at these times.

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

Children say that they feel safe and well cared for by their foster carers. There is a strong focus on matching children well with foster carers. Foster carers and supervising social workers understand the risks for children. Safety plans for children are personalised, with clear strategies for carers to help them to reduce harm.

There have been no standards of care meetings or allegations against foster carers since the last inspection. Managers and staff are experienced social work practitioners, who understand what they must do to ensure that children remain safe. Staff know what to do when there is a need to report safeguarding concerns to the relevant agencies. Foster carers and staff receive appropriate child protection and safeguarding training.

Children rarely go missing from their foster homes. When children do go missing, foster carers understand what they need to do to maintain communication with them and reduce the risk of harm. One child explained how they were helped to understand the risks associated with being missing from home and why the foster carers needed to report them missing.

Foster carers and supervising social workers respond quickly to new risks that arise for children. Supervising social workers update safety plans with foster carers, and provide additional support and information to children and carers. This includes identifying appropriate therapy or information about drug and alcohol use to share with children.

A strength of the agency is the quality of the relationships that children have with their carers. Incidents within the home are rare. One foster carer is 'curious' with their child when they behave differently, helping the child to communicate how they are feeling. Another foster carer stated that what they were most proud of was the fact that their child listened to them when they needed to set boundaries, even though the child might not like it. Foster carers help children to think about their behaviour and understand that there are consequences for unacceptable behaviour.

Safer recruitment procedures ensure that only appropriately vetted individuals work with children. This reduces the risk of harm to children.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

Leaders and managers work to a clear ethos, where the child is at the centre of all initiatives and activity within the agency. The leadership and management team consists of a stable and widely experienced group of practitioners. Children and foster carers benefit from the expertise that the leadership and management team bring in the areas of child placement, social work with children and families, and safeguarding.

The registered manager has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the service. Established members of the management and leadership team praise the registered manager for the positive changes that they have brought to the fostering agency's practice. An example of this is the endorsement by the manager of a programme of training for foster carers, which helps carers to reflect on their own responses to children's trauma.

Staff consistently report that managers support them well, are accessible, and have a genuine interest in their well-being. Staff receive regular supervision and reflective practice sessions facilitated by an experienced child and adolescent psychotherapist.

The registered manager is developing efficient monitoring systems to provide effective oversight of day-to-day work and tasks. Nevertheless, shortfalls in the tracking of the renewal of one foster carer's Disclosure and Barring Service checks led to the checks expiring.

Foster carers generally say that they receive good support from their supervising social worker and the agency. However, in two cases, foster carers expressed disappointment with the support received from their supervising social worker. The registered manager is taking action to address expectations regarding levels of support.

Foster carers and staff have access to an extensive range of training and learning opportunities. Leaders and managers encourage staff and foster carers to undertake additional training and obtain specific qualifications. Staff have undertaken specialist training, such as dyadic development psychotherapy, as part of their professional development. One foster carer has completed initial training on the innovative use of Montessori principles and theories applied to the care of children in foster care. However, the recording of staff and foster carer training is not consistent.

The fostering panel operates effectively as an independent quality assurance mechanism for the agency. Fostering panel processes, including reviews of foster carers, are robust. The fostering panel reflect on recommendations made and identify learning from more-challenging cases to improve practice. The agency decision-maker works well with the panel and agency to endorse recommendations in a timely manner.

The agency supports fostering for adoption carers well. One carer said that the agency prepared them as much as they could do for the uncertainty that these arrangements bring. The carer said 'they had our backs' when the responsible authority's care planning was uncertain.

Managers and staff have good relationships with key agencies and individuals who are involved in supporting children in foster care. Social workers spoken to said that communication with the agency is, overall, positive. Where responsible authorities are not fulfilling their responsibilities, managers and staff challenge and escalate appropriately.

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

### **Recommendations**

- 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. Specifically, the registered person should ensure that foster carer and staff training is recording in a consistent and timely manner. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 25.2)
- Management of the service ensures that all staff's work and all fostering activity are consistent with the 2011 Regulations and NMS and with the service's policies and procedures. Specifically, the registered person should ensure that all foster carers' Disclosure and Barring Service checks are renewed within agreed timescales. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 25.3)
- The registered manager should ensure that foster carers understand the nature and level of support which will be provided to them by the fostering service. Specifically, where changes in supervising social workers take place, the supervision agreement should accurately reflect the nature and level of support to foster carers. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 21.2)

### **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:** SC484575

**Registered provider:** Diagrama Children's Services Limited

**Registered provider address:** Airport House, Purley Way CR0 0XZ

**Responsible individual:** David McGuire

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## **Inspector**

Colin Bent, Social Care Inspector

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