

# The Children's Family Trust

The Children's Family Trust

Hanbury Court, Harris Business Park, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove,  
Worcestershire B60 4DJ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This agency is part of a national charity. It currently has 72 carers in 42 households caring for 59 children. It provides a range of fostering services, including long- and short-term care, respite care, and parent and baby placements.

**Inspection dates:** 13 to 17 August 2018

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>good</b>
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:** 25 November 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:

- Children make good progress in their foster homes and feel that they belong.
- The agency focuses on the long-term care of children and carers, wherever possible. It supports children into adulthood.
- Children feel safe and are rarely exposed to unnecessary risks. When this does occur, the staff liaise well with other agencies.
- There is careful assessment of new carers and the panel scrutinises new applications rigorously.
- The agency values its carers highly. Consequently, the carers feel part of the team that supports each child.
- The agency employs a high calibre of staff. Staff members are committed and fulfil the aims and objectives of the agency.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- The supervision of some carers is not sufficiently thorough. This is an unnecessary risk.
- Some carers are not completing the required amount of training. This raises questions about their engagement with the service and commitment to their own learning and development.
- Some areas of administration are not sufficiently strong, including parts of staff recruitment, recordings, monitoring and notification of significant events to other agencies.

## 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>Ensure that the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11(a))</p> <p>This is with regard to obtaining relevant documents in a timely way.</p>	29/10/2018
<p>Provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. (Regulation 17(1))</p> <p>This is with regard to providing training and supervision to all carers in line with the agency's policy.</p>	26/11/2018
<p>Ensure the fostering service provider does not employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1. (Regulation 20(1)(a)(3))</p> <p>This is with regard to verifying the reasons the applicant left previous roles with children or vulnerable adults.</p>	24/09/2018
<p>Ensure that there is a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals; and improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster carers, and their placing authorities. (Regulations 35(1)(b) and 35(3))</p>	24/09/2018
<p>Ensure that if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 36(1))</p>	24/09/2018

## **Recommendations**

- Implement a system to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed. (NMS 26.2)
  
- Record information about the child clearly and in a way that will be helpful to the child when they access their file now or in the future. (NMS 26.6)  
This is with regard to their matching documents containing sufficient information about why placements are deemed to be appropriate.

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Carers meet the children's diverse needs well. They often have personal knowledge of their foster child's heritage, which helps them to give meaningful support.

Children establish good relationships with their carers and feel secure. Most children are in long-term placements and enjoy placement stability.

The agency's staff implement thorough processes to ensure that children are placed in suitable households. Agency staff consider the impact on children of being placed outside their home areas. Children often benefit by finding out about their prospective carers in advance of moving in. This consultation gives them an opportunity to ask questions and allays their anxieties. However, the supervising social workers do not always record this process well on children's files. This is a recording shortfall and does not have a negative impact on children's progress and experiences.

The vast majority of children progress well. Agency records show children's improvements over time, for example with their health and education. Carers advocate for children and ensure that they get the right help and support. For example, one child was found not to have autism spectrum disorder, which significantly altered her care needs and management plan. Children show emotional progress too, which helps in all aspects of their lives. They make friends and enjoy a range of activities. Many attend the celebratory events arranged by the agency, including arts and crafts activities, where their views are obtained. Children have contributed to the development of an imaginative children's guide to the agency. It is engaging and interactive.

To address one of its core principles, the agency helps children into independence, then supports them afterwards practically, and financially if necessary. Recently, for example, the agency helped one young man to obtain a flat. For those children who require a different placement, the agency's staff help them to move to new placements in a planned way, whenever possible. These steps help to reduce the pressure on children.

The manager visits all prospective carers and oversees their progress through the assessment process well. Consequently, new carers feel positive about the whole process. One new carer told Ofsted, 'The agency talks about children rather than statistics, I liked that. [The process] was very efficient. I definitely feel part of a team and valued.'

The carers are very pleased with the support that they and their own children receive from the agency. One carer reflected the views of many when he said, '[The agency] really is amazing, they go over and above for us and the children; their support is faultless.' Carers appreciate the charitable ethos of the organisation and its efforts to support foster children when they become adults. The supervising

social workers are of a high calibre. However, the supervision of the second carers in some households is not sufficient to ensure their ongoing engagement and competence.

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

Children feel safe in their placements and rarely raise concerns. Incidents in which children put themselves at risk by going missing are infrequent. Children who are not where they are supposed to be usually return or are found within a short space of time. Staff act promptly to support carers and to ensure that other agencies, such as social workers and police, are acting to protect children.

The supervising social workers ensure that carers understand the risks to children of sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Main carers attend appropriate training courses on these subjects. The supervising social workers give carers insightful advice about dealing with children's negative behaviour. The agency is rolling out training to staff and carers, which encourages a therapeutic approach to such needs.

Staff identify the risks faced by children well and devise plans to help carers minimise the dangers. Staff liaise closely with other agencies when children make allegations and make sure that important meetings occur, which avoids delays. Carers and children receive good support during these difficult times, although the registered manager does not always notify Ofsted of significant events as required.

Records usually provide clear accounts of events. However, the manager is considering ways to ensure greater consistency and quality in record-keeping.

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

Ofsted registered the manager in 2016. She is a qualified social worker and has almost completed a qualification in management. She recently obtained the post of regional manager and a new manager is in place who will apply to Ofsted for registration.

As required by the home's statement of purpose, the manager and her team maintain a very clear focus on children and helping them progress. They can readily show the progress made by individual children.

The registered manager has addressed Ofsted's previous requirement and recommendations. Improvements have been made to staff recruitment. However, these improvements have not gone far enough. For example, the registered manager does not always verify the reasons that the applicant left previous roles that involved working with children or vulnerable adults. This shortfall also raises questions about the quality of monitoring and oversight of recruitment practice.

The agency does not obtain the required documents for some children within reasonable timescales. This means that carers are without written verification of key information for lengthy periods.

The manager has improved her team's attention to the training requirements of carers. However, there remain significant shortfalls in attendance, including at mandatory courses, such as first aid and medicine administration. In addition, the manager is not sufficiently clear about the specification of some courses, for example in restraint. Improvements have included providing a course called Men Who Foster and encouraging greater use of online courses and use of a venue in the north of the area.

Staff enjoy working at the agency. They feel supported by the manager and consider that the focus on children's needs creates a common bond. They attend ongoing training events that contribute to their professional development. For example, one will soon undertake training about compiling assessments of new carers.

The agency benefits from a strong panel that is well organised. The panel now has members from diverse backgrounds, including several who have been in the care of local authorities. Panel members are committed to the organisation and share its values.

The manager's monitoring of the service is weak in parts. She holds insufficient data about some key issues. This means that there is insufficient progress in addressing, for example, the supervision of second carers and carers' training. Her reviews of the quality of care do not address all the required issues and the latest annual data sent to Ofsted was inaccurate. For example, the manager confused the number of children with the number of households. This reduces the ability of Ofsted to understand the scope of the service and lack of effective monitoring limits the capacity of the agency to improve.

## **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:** SC034804

**Registered provider:** The Children's Family Trust

**Registered provider address:** Hanbury Court, Harris Business Park, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 4DJ

**Responsible individual:** Marina Mulholland

**Registered manager:** Jayne Figgett

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## **Inspectors**

David Morgan, social care inspector

Anna Gravelle, social care inspector





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