

Diverse Care

Diverse Care (UK) Ltd

Quayside House, Quayside, Chatham Maritime, Chatham ME4 4QZ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency registered with Ofsted on 2 December 2004. The manager has been in post since April 2021 and has applied to register with Ofsted.

In this organisation, people who care for children in their homes are referred to as foster parents and are referred to as such in this report.

Foster parents provide long-term, respite and permanent care placements. The organisation also provides placements for children with disabilities and parent and child placements. At the time of this inspection, there were 70 approved foster families providing fostering placements to 96 children.

Inspection dates: 26 to 30 September 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 15 May 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children thrive in nurturing placements and as a result make exceptional progress physically, socially, emotionally and educationally.

Managers are highly effective at identifying children's individual needs and matching children with their foster parents. This early work ensures that children have excellent starts in their placements.

Foster parents have high aspirations for children in their care and treat them as part of the family. Foster parents are proactive and imaginative in finding ways to support children in every aspect of their lives. This includes children experiencing a broad range of activities that enable them to gain life skills and to pursue hobbies.

Foster parents place the well-being of children at the centre of their practice and take up training opportunities to help them meet children's individual needs. For example, some foster parents have received tailored training in the use of Makaton, to support children with communication difficulties to express their feelings and wishes. Other foster parents have received training in understanding substance misuse. This has given foster parents essential insight that they have been able to use to keep children safe.

There is extensive engagement between foster parents, staff, children's social workers, teachers, and health professionals. This excellent partnership working adds considerably to children's positive experiences and exceptional progress.

Children know that their views, wishes, and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care. There are countless opportunities for children to give feedback and to be consulted on the development of the agency.

Foster parents value education highly and strongly advocate for children. Foster parents help older children with applying for jobs, making college applications, and preparing for their futures.

Foster parents support children to maintain and develop their relationships with their families, in accordance with their care plans.

The fostering panel is diverse, and the chair is a former child in care. Panel members work together to ensure that there is a high level of oversight and scrutiny of applications and placements.

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

Early identification of problems ensures that children are not able to slip through the net in relation to safeguarding.

Staff and foster parents have a sound understanding of risks and manage these effectively. Risk assessments are individual and reflect the needs of each child. All assessments are reviewed and updated to reflect changes in the level of risk and any newly identified risks.

Proactive safeguarding practice from the agency's safeguarding and education specialist means that all children, including the most vulnerable, have a strong sense of safety and well-being.

Staff and foster parents know how to raise concerns about the safety of a child. They have an impressive understanding of the procedures to follow when a child is missing. Children engage in return home discussions with the safeguarding specialist. This provides children with a safe space to express their feelings and talk about their reasons for going missing.

Staff are proactive in setting up events that help to educate children on how to keep themselves safe. This includes helping children to understand how they may become at risk of exploitation. Some activities have resulted in children producing leaflets and cards on how to stay safe in the community.

Training in behaviour management focuses on a secure base and secure attachment. Positive behaviour is encouraged, and foster parents are clear around the expectations. Foster parents promote strong boundaries that children understand and adhere to. For example, one child understood why their phone should be handed in by a certain time.

Strong safeguarding arrangements are in place to protect children and to promote their welfare. Weekly safeguarding meetings review concerns about children. This includes having clear and effective communication with local authority designated officers (LADOs). One LADO said, 'They are thorough in the way that they manage situations,' and 'They are open and good communicators.'

Robust safer recruitment practices are in place. Only staff with suitable skills, qualifications and good character work for the organisation.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers show a high degree of ambition for the children in their care.

The current manager has submitted her application to Ofsted to be the registered manager. The manager is an experienced social care professional with extensive safeguarding knowledge.

Staff training is well structured and provides staff with varied opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills.

Leaders and managers have high expectations of their staff and foster parents. Leaders are good at evaluating their work and setting realistic targets to drive continued improvement. As a result, leaders understand the progress that children are making and where further development of the service is needed.

However, there was one small omission in practice. Although assessments regarding prospective foster parents are of a high standard and are analytical, on one isolated occasion an application was submitted to the panel before the assessment had been completed. The provider has taken steps to reduce the likelihood that this will happen again. There was no negative impact on children or carers.

Leaders and managers provide a strong and supportive environment. Staff morale is high, with staff feeling well supported. Staff supervision is consistent and of high quality.

Feedback from local authorities, foster parents and children is extremely positive.

Leaders and managers recognise the importance of staff development and well-being. They provide a range of activities to engage staff and there was a recent team-building trip abroad. This enabled staff to feel valued and part of the organisation.

Leaders and managers challenge when the responses from other services are not effective. For example, when the safeguarding and education specialist requested information about a child's education background and did not get a response, this was quickly escalated.

Leaders and managers actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion. The building is a hub where a range of activities and group meetings take place. There is evidence of inclusion around the building, for example, themed rooms regarding faith and religion. There is a system of buddying up carers to support each other. The support groups are a good opportunity to share skills, advice, guidance and knowledge. Because of this, a feeling of warmth and respect permeates the organisation.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the written report on a person's suitability to be approved as a foster carer sets out clearly all the information that the fostering panel and decision-maker need in order to make an objective approval decision. The reports should be accurate, up to date and include evidence-based information that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. The reports should be prepared, signed and dated by the social worker who assessed the prospective foster carer and countersigned and dated by the fostering team manager or a team manager of another of the provider's fostering teams. In particular, ensure that assessment reports presented to panel are complete and enable the panel to make a recommendation of whether an applicant is suitable or not. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 13.7)

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: SC062695

Registered provider: Diverse Care (UK) Ltd

Registered provider address: Quayside House, Chatham Maritime, Chatham ME4 4QZ

Responsible individual: Keith Gorman

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Inspector

Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector

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