

Five Rivers Fostering Service

Five Rivers Child Care Limited

Unit 3, London Road Office Park, London Road, Salisbury SP1 3HP

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency is one of five branches of a national not-for-profit agency. This branch, which covers the south of England, operates from its premises in Salisbury, Wiltshire. It offers a variety of placements, including parent and child, emergency, respite, long-term and short-term fostering placements.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 17 to 21 January 2022

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 December 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

COVID-19 has not had a significant impact on the agency's capacity to continue delivering good support. At times, visits to carers and children have been completed virtually. However, the standard of support provided has not been compromised.

Many children benefit from stable long-term care arrangements. Unplanned endings to children's placements have been consistently low on a yearly basis since the previous inspection. Support to prevent unplanned endings is in the process of being embedded into practice. This includes therapeutic input from an in-house psychologist.

The organisation also has several children's homes within the Wiltshire area. This means that some children benefit from moving to foster placements from children's homes within the agency. Several children are currently in staying-put arrangements, which means they can remain with their carers for longer. This provides children with important stability and consistency post age 18 and into early adulthood.

Most children are attending school and further education. Some children are also moving on to university while continuing to be supported by their carers.

Children are actively encouraged to provide feedback to support improvement within the agency. Many creative and fun approaches are used to obtain children's views. These views are used to make child-centred improvements. Children spoken with during the inspection commented on how much they enjoy the activities they can take part in, such as meeting animals and fun days.

The information provided for children prior to coming into the care of the agency is not always appropriate to the ages and needs of children. This does not provide them with reassurance about what they can expect.

Foster carers speak fondly of children. There is an evident culture of carers wanting the best for children. Many children remain in contact with their foster carers once they have moved on. This demonstrates the quality of relationships and the positive impact that carers have on children's lives.

Assessments of new carers and reviews of practice are thorough. Furthermore, the oversight of the standard of care that carers provide to children is good.

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

Safeguarding concerns are well managed, and action taken is timely and effective. The relevant external professionals are contacted, and any development areas are identified and acted on.

Support provided to children and carers when there are concerns is good. For example, support visits are increased, and specialist support is provided when needed.

Safer care plans are limited in detail and do not always provide carers with clear guidance regarding what to do to help keep children safe. Known risks are not fully explored and any action which is needed to reduce risk is not clarified. This includes the safer plans which are completed for parent and child placements. A new template has been developed to strengthen these, although it is yet to be embedded into practice.

The agency does not ensure that carers who support young people over the age of 18 have the relevant training in relation to adult safeguarding. This does not promote carers' duty to safeguard young adults.

Matching assessments of how carers will meet the needs of the children lack detail. Existing and historical risks are not fully considered and explored. There is limited consideration of the impact of a child joining a foster placement on the other children already in the home.

Supervising social workers visit carers and children on a regular basis. This includes unannounced visits within which children are seen and their welfare is explored.

Fostering Support Workers complete good direct work with children that explores concerns identified by foster carers. This includes helping children make sense of their emotions, keeping safe online and their feelings around family time. Some examples have very little detail, whereas others show a reflective and meaningful account of the event. Good examples reflect the positive impact that this has on children's well-being and safety.

Supervising social workers challenge placing authorities when they don't view the best interests of children are met during care planning. For example, placing authorities moved a child too quickly without exploring how to repair the relationship between the child and carer first.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The current manager has made an application to Ofsted but is not yet registered. During this transition period, the manager is being well supported by other senior leaders within the agency.

Although many children are cared for by the agency, individual children are known well. There is a family ethos throughout the care and staff team. However, when needed, supervising social workers challenge carers and support reflection to help them understand how to better meet the complex needs of children.

Senior leaders and managers are striving to improve practice and to learn from any identified development areas. For example, they have developed a new three-day training course for carers who provide parent and child placements.

A good standard of training is provided for carers. The completion of training is also closely monitored to ensure that carers are kept up to date. Where appropriate, additional training is provided. The fostering panel represents a diverse and experienced team of individuals. It enables the approval of safe and suitable carers through robust quality assurance processes.

A significant amount of feedback has been received from carers who speak highly of the support they receive from the agency to meet the needs of children. However, gaps in social workers and support workers' case recordings do not clarify the level of support which is provided. This does not provide important written narrative regarding the support provided and its effectiveness.

Management oversight of practice is of a good standard. Various mechanisms are used to monitor concerns, support practice development, and to identify wider development opportunities within the agency.

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 registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that—</p> <p>the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (a))</p> <p>In particular, safer care plans must be comprehensive and individualised to the needs of the child.</p>	3 March 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are carefully matched to a foster placement. Foster carers have full information about the child (as set out in standard 3.9). ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 23, paragraph 11.2)
- The registered person should ensure that all foster carers who support young people who are over the age of 18 years receive appropriate training in relation to adult safeguarding, and that arrangements are consistent with the young person's safer care plan. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 25, paragraph 12.3)
- The registered person should subject to the child's age and understanding, ensure the child receives the Children's Guide at the point of placement and that the foster carer explains the contents of the Children's Guide in a way that is accessible. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 33, paragraph 16.3)
- The registered person should ensure information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. Children are actively encouraged to read their files, other than necessarily confidential or third-party information, and to correct errors and add personal statements. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 52, paragraph 26.6)

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: SC036261

Registered provider: Five Rivers Child Care Limited

Registered provider address: 47 Bedwin Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 3UT

Responsible individual: Martin Leitch

Registered manager: Post vacant

Telephone number: 01722421142

Email address: martin.leitch@five-rivers.org

Inspectors

Polly Soper, Social Care Inspector

Penelope Kutz, Social Care Inspector

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