

Five Rivers Fostering Service – West Country

Five Rivers Child Care Limited

Park House, Threemilestone Business Park, Truro, Cornwall TR4 9LD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Five Rivers is a national independent fostering agency with several branches throughout England.

This service provides a range of fostering services, including short-term, long-term and emergency care for children who may have complex needs. The service also provides parent and child placements.

The manager, who registered with Ofsted on 2 April 2024, has recently resigned from her post and was not present for this inspection.

Inspection dates: 17 to 20 February 2025

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: 7 March 2022

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 engage in education and do well, and they have aspirations for their future. Foster carers support children's academic progress, and their achievements are praised and rewarded. Children's health needs are consistently met. Carers ensure that they have access to local health services.

Children feel settled and comfortable in their foster families. They have a sense of belonging within the family, knowing their foster carers will be there to support them. They are seen as part of the immediate and wider family. Foster carers are passionate about the children they care for and are committed to providing them with a loving home.

Foster carers who work for the agency highly value the support that is provided to them. They find connection groups and participation groups a real value to the role they undertake. Foster carers report that training is of a high standard and use the skills they have learned to enhance their care. Children are helped to develop strategies to manage difficult feelings.

Foster carers are provided with training, and the deliverance of the attachment trauma-informed care model to carers and staff has been spoken highly of, as it provides foster carers with knowledge of clear and consistent care to children. If training is out of date, it is not always identified until the foster carer review report is compiled.

Most children make progress from their starting points. There is inconsistency in the outcomes tracker being updated to have a clear overview of all the children's progress and allow that knowledge to move with the child, should they need to.

Children who are new to the agency are welcomed in. While children are cared for by Five Rivers, they can be involved in participation. Participation can be national or local. The agency strategy involves foster and birth children and is linked to children's rights and protected characteristics. It provides a wide range of participation and inclusive events.

The clinical team is an established, trained and experienced team, whose members have a broad range of skills that are used to enhance the care of the children in the agency. They adapt and improve their service in line with the changing needs of the wider systems and children in their care. The interventions offered are regularly reviewed.

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

Unplanned endings are evaluated and learned from. The agency involves foster carers as part of the evaluation to understand their own strengths and vulnerabilities. Targeted meetings take place alongside the clinical team to identify

any patterns, to impact on timely agency support to reduce the number of unplanned endings.

Restraint reporting and recording are clear. The records identify learning and include the children in helping to understand what happened. The agency undertakes follow-up supervisions, support and training linked to the needs of the child they are caring for and to equip the foster carers more fully for the future and reduce the use of restraint.

Risk rating meetings are used effectively in order to highlight when placements need additional support. They also recognise when the placements have stabilised. When vulnerabilities increase, the agency reviews individual safer care and risk reduction plans. These are not always consistent and have not always moved with the child, leaving short break carers without the knowledge required to provide safe and consistent care.

When children go missing from care, foster carers understand the protocols for reporting incidents to the police and to other key professionals, including out of hours and the local authority. The agency has improved its response to missing-from-care incidents since the last inspection, including advocating for the completion of return home conversations. There are plans in place to reduce harm from missing episodes, linked into the risk rating system used in line with children's individual circumstances.

Allegations and standards of care review processes are followed. They include input from senior leaders to both support and challenge foster carers when necessary. There are effective links with the local authority designated officer and the child's social worker. Any previous incidents are considered alongside current concerns to provide a balanced view of whether carers have breached standards of care. Carefully assessed decisions ensure that children living with carers are safe.

The agency has built effective links with local authorities. The agency knows when to escalate matters when they have not had effective communication around safeguarding in the moment it is needed.

The agency operates an effective out of hours service. Foster carers praise the availability of workers when they needed out of hours support.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has recently resigned from her post. Senior managers have a plan in place alongside active recruitment to fill the post. Staff and foster carers are aware of the change in management and feel confident in the interim plans.

Leaders and managers have woven equality, diversity and inclusion throughout their service. It is reflected in resources, discussions and in case records. Leaders and managers are aware of how people are represented and unrepresented in the

groups of carers, staff and children. They actively strive to have equity across the groups.

The use of data supports leaders and managers to regularly monitor the quality of care provided. They utilise key performance indicators to better understand all areas of the agency and learn as a leadership group and as a staff team. The leaders and managers can identify areas of strength within the agency and have a strategic approach to the development areas that require improvement.

Staff who work for the agency feel part of a team, and they feel supported and enjoy the work they do. Leaders and managers have created a culture of high expectations and aspirations for children. Staff report modelling of good practice and care by the leaders and managers. They understand how their individual roles benefit the children in the agencies care and feel motivated to continue to do a good job.

The fostering panel promotes safe and secure placements. The panel chair has the necessary experience for the role. They acknowledge that the panel is not wholly diverse and continue to consider ways to involve the children. Panel reports are of good quality.

Team meetings are regular and well attended. A space has been created for supervising social workers to contribute from their own experience and emerging needs across the agency. There is a sense that the agency employs a vibrant group of supervising social workers who are given time for development as both individual practitioners and as a team.

Supervisions are recorded effectively. Individual actions are clearly identified, with reflections about cases and children's needs. Staff development and areas for further training are considered.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure the service implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. In particular, the registered person to ensure that safer care plans move with the child. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 14, paragraph 4.5)
- The registered person should ensure that areas of concern, or need for additional support, that are identified between reviews are addressed. Such matters identified between reviews are addressed at the time they are identified, where appropriate, rather than waiting for a review. In particular, the registered person to ensure any training not completed is identified in a timely way. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 29, paragraph 13.9)
- The registered person should ensure staff, volunteers, panel members and fostering households understand the nature of records maintained and follow the service's policy for the keeping and retention of files, managing confidential information and access to files (including files removed from the premises). There is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed. In particular, the registered person to ensure that children's outcome trackers are regularly updated. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 252, paragraph 26.2)

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: SC062487

Registered provider: Five Rivers Child Care Limited

Registered provider address: Five Rivers Childcare, 47 Bedwin Street, Salisbury
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Responsible individual: Jacob Strydom

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Inspectors

Hannah Spencer-Townsend, Social Care Inspector
Steve Lowe, Social Care Inspector

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