

Families@Familycare

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

Unique reference number	SC413993
Inspection date	27/07/2011
Inspector	David Morgan
Type of inspection	Social Care Inspection

Setting address	Families@Familycare (Midlands office), Unit 12, Sansaw Business Park, Hadnall, SHREWSBURY, SY4 4AS
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Registered person	Families@FamilyCare Limited
Registered manager	Jan Tomasz Blazak
Responsible individual	Edward Peter Nixon
Date of last inspection	13/09/2010

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

- Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
- Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
- Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
- Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

own children. Their individual health needs, such as dental checks and eye tests, are met well and are subject to routine monitoring by support social workers. Specialist health advisors provide advice and support when required. Carers make sure that any special needs arising, for example from disabilities, are fully resourced in terms of specialist equipment and advice. One young person said, 'They help me in all areas.'

In addition, the organisation provides a high level of therapeutic input. This is overseen or delivered by qualified staff and support staff and represents a significant strand of the child-centred ethos of the service. Carefully compiled programmes delivered through play activities, for instance, are designed to help difficulties with anger management and sexuality. Some foster carers receive training to enable them to undertake direct work with children and young people, for example, through life story work, if this is an assessed need of the child or young person. Carers are extremely positive about the effect this has on their skills and the benefits for children and young people, for example, in terms of their ability to maintain relationships, integrate with peers and benefit from their experiences in foster care. One carer said, 'He had poor attachment but has now settled well and is doing well at school.' Another said, 'This sort of support has helped our placements run smoothly.'

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children and young people are effectively protected from harm. Incidents of children and young people being absent without authority are minimal as are other negative events and this is a positive reflection on the support they receive. There is good understanding amongst staff and carers about relevant procedures. Safe-caring guidelines and risk assessments are clear, reviewed and are amended as necessary. These are implemented proportionately which means that children and young people are allowed to take reasonable risks, for example, by engaging in challenging outdoor activities.

Carers and children and young people feel it is a very 'open' service in which people are not afraid to ask questions; they are made to feel safe. This feeling is reflected by staff at all levels of the organisation. This means that concerns or suspicions are shared quickly and appropriate contact made with other agencies when necessary. Partner agencies feel the service is good at communicating with them.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Effective promotion of constructive life-styles and effective relationship-building mean that incidents of negative behaviour are relatively infrequent. Positive behaviour is encouraged and carers are taught how to avoid problems escalating. All parts of the service reward children and young people's positive behaviour and

progress made by children and young people is satisfactorily shown in their placement support records.

The organisation ensures that it demonstrates a commitment to equal opportunities through various policies, including the application of its recruitment policy. Staff are from a wide range of backgrounds, ages groups and include men and women. Activities and events for children and young people are arranged to reflect the variety of religions and cultures in the community. These steps give a high value to social diversity, which one carer felt 'could not be better'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The service provides satisfactory support to young people preparing for independence. Although day-to-day arrangements provide young people with many useful skills, there is a lack of close attention by supervising social worker's to the achievement of practical skills. This means that young people and their carers are not as well prepared as possible.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a high level of monitoring and quality assurance throughout the organisation. For example, surveys are undertaken of carers' views and a recent survey of placing social workers was completed. These measures inform practices such as recruitment. There are comprehensive arrangements in place to ensure that recruitment of carers and staff is thorough. In particular, efforts are made to ensure that individuals are able to work in the child-centred way the organisation expects. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. People from all backgrounds are welcomed and encouraged. There is a robust commitment to recruit and work with gay and lesbian foster carers and to only limit foster carer recruitment on the grounds of ill health, not age. All carers feel that the friendly integration of the whole team is a strength. In particular, substantial efforts are made to help children and young people achieve equality with their peers.

New foster carers are assessed thoroughly and the panel provides a reliable, independent check. The arrangements for panel are comprehensive and are well-received by new foster carers. Panel also ensures that lessons are learnt and integrated into practice. Panel members are taught to consider equality and diversity issues throughout the process. There is a particularly thorough system of feedback to the manager regarding applications. For example, improvements were made to the supervision of assessors to ensure that assessments are completed adequately. Panel members and other staff have access to a comprehensive range of policies and these are currently being updated in line with changes to the regulations and national minimum standards.

	control, restraint and discipline of children placed with foster parents, with regard to staff fully understanding the policy on restraint. (Regulation 13(1))	
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):


- ensure there are comprehensive arrangements for preparing and supporting young people to make the transition to independence. This includes appropriate training and support to foster carers (NMS 12.3)
- ensure the impact of a new placement on existing household members is considered, with regard to the likely impact of emergency admissions on long-term placements (NMS 15.1)
- ensure there is good support for staff, with regard to policies and procedures being up to date including those pertaining to exemptions to the usual fostering limit (NMS 24.1)
- ensure that staff are provided with regular supervision, with regard to following the procedure and addressing casework matters in sufficient detail. (NMS 24.4)

OFSTED ACTION PLAN - REQUIREMENTS

Unit/Service:	Families@FamilyCare (Midlands)
Based on Ofsted Inspection Report Dated:	27.07.11

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Standard	Action Needed	Action Taken	Due Date	Person Responsible
13 (2011)	Must implement a written policy on acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline of children placed with foster carers, with regard to staff fully understanding the policy on restraint. (Regulation 13 (1))	We will rewrite the existing policy to improve clarity and we have already gone through this with all staff who can now all demonstrate full understanding of the spirit and application of the existing policy	Action with staff completed; policy to be rewritten as part of general review that will be complete by 12/11	Jan Blazak

 family care associates	Main Section Quality Assurance	For Use By: Registered Manager	Version No: 1.1	<i>Notes on use:</i> To be completed and returned to the Head of Residential Services.
	Sub Section:	Authorised: Mike La-Borde, Group Business Manager	Date issued: 23.02.10	


OFSTED ACTION PLAN - RECOMMENDATIONS

Unit/Service:	Families@FamilyCare (Midlands)
Based on Ofsted Inspection Report Dated:	27.07.11

Standard (NMS)	Action Needed	Action Taken	Due Date	Person Responsible
12.3	Ensure there are comprehensive arrangements for preparing and supporting young people to make the transition to independence. This includes appropriate training and support to foster carers.	We believe that there are good plans in place but accept that the evidence of their existence was lacking at the time of the inspection. We are introducing a 'Passport to Independence' scheme for all of our Young people to enhance opportunities and evidence our work in preparation for independence. We will ensure that plans are discussed in Supervision with staff and carers.	Immediate	Jan Blazak, Registered Manager
15.1	Ensure the impact of a new placement on existing household members is considered, with regard to the likely impact of emergency admissions on long-term placements.	We accept this point – although we make very few emergency placements. Unfortunately sometimes the details available to /offered by placing Local Authorities are not as accurate as they could be. We will review our 'matching' process in light of this. We will develop a matching Performa to take into account the needs of any young person already in place.	Immediate	Jan Blazak, Registered Manager
24.1	Ensure there is good support for staff, with regard to policies and procedures being up to date including those pertaining to exemptions to the usual fostering limit.	Again this point is accepted in good faith – we made an error insofar as we did not notice the date for the review of an exemption – which was rather random. Nonetheless we are fully responsible and this will not happen again. Training on exemptions and variations is already planned for staff & carers.	Immediate	Jan Blazak, Registered Manager

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Standard (NMS)	Action Needed	Action Taken	Due Date	Person Responsible
24.4	Ensure that staff are provided with regular supervision, with regard to following the procedure and addressing casework matters in sufficient detail.	All supervision is regular already. However we have now introduced improved systems to ensure that all cases are regularly reviewed and that there is evidence to record and demonstrate this. QA to be strengthened in respect of internal audit of practice. Casework discussions will be recorded in supervision notes and outcomes of such discussions, including any actions required, will also be clearly noted.	New system being introduced forthwith. Will be fully implemented by the start of September	Jan Blazak, Registered Manager

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