

# Jay Fostering

Jay Fostering Limited 04822721

Jay Fostering Limited, Unit I, Edward House, Grange Business Park, Enderby Road, Whetstone, Leicester LE8 6EP

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Jay Fostering is an independent fostering agency based in Leicestershire. It is a stand-alone company but is part of the National Fostering Agency group. The agency provides a wide range of fostering placements including emergency, short-term, long-term, bridging and parent and child placements. The agency provided placements for 179 children in 113 fostering households as of 3 July 2017.

**Inspection dates:** 3 to 7 July 2017

**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:** 29 June 2015

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Following the last inspection and monitoring visit, managers and staff have made significant improvements in all areas. This has led to improved outcomes for children.
- From their starting points, children have made very positive progress in all areas of their lives. They enjoy stable and secure foster placements with competent and caring foster carers.
- Foster carers report feeling well supported by agency staff and managers. They receive good-quality training, development opportunities and supervision.
- Noticeable improvements have been made in relation to the fostering panel. These include the appointment of a new panel chair and increased panel membership.
- Agency staff and managers regularly consult with children and foster carers. The views of children and foster carers have been taken into account and used to inform developments within the agency.
- Recruitment and assessments of foster carers are robust and safe.
- Management systems for monitoring all aspects of the service have been improved. Managers and agency staff can now monitor the progress of children effectively.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Managers need to ensure that the fostering panel is quorate for every meeting. A requirement was set at the last inspection, which has been reset at this inspection.
- Managers need to ensure that complainants are kept fully informed about the progress and outcomes of their complaints.
- Panel members need to sign an acceptance form to record their agreement to the performance objectives set out by the fostering service. A recommendation was set at the last inspection, which has not been met. The recommendation has been reset at this inspection.

## 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
Ensure that no business is conducted by a fostering panel unless at least the following meet as the panel – one member who is a social worker who has at least three years' relevant post qualifying experience. (Regulation 24 (1)(ii))	01/09/2017

### Recommendations

- Ensure that panel members sign an acceptance form to record their agreement to the performance objectives set out by the fostering service. (Volume 4, paragraph 5.14)
- Ensure that children receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised and are kept informed of progress. (NMS 1.6)

## Inspection judgements

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

From their starting points, children make very positive progress in all areas of their lives. They form trusting and secure attachments to their foster carers and feel well cared for. They feel safe and valued by their carers. Agencies contacted during this inspection were consistently positive about the support provided to children. A local authority staff member stated that, 'The carers have gone above and beyond their role to support the children placed. The progress made by them is great to see.'

Children feel very much a part of the foster carer's families. The use of respite care is relatively low. This reflects the fact that carers want to include their foster children in all aspects of their family lives. Children have been able to experience new things, such as holidays abroad. They have a wide range of social activities and develop a real sense of belonging in their local communities.

A strong and commendable emphasis is placed on meeting the educational needs of children placed. Carers act as strong advocates for children placed with them. They ensure that suitable education, training and employment options are in place. Children learn the value of education and have aspirations for their futures. Several have gone on to study at university or have plans to do so.

Twelve young people have remained living with their carers under 'staying put' arrangements to date, with plans in place to consider other young people as they approach adulthood. This provides additional security and a sense of belonging to young people. It reflects carers' commitment to them and how well integrated they have become.

Children feel able to express their wishes and feelings to both their carers and agency staff. They know how to raise any concerns or complaints they may have. Records reflect the actions taken by the agency and the outcomes of investigations. One complaint considered during this inspection did not provide sufficient or clear evidence of how a child was kept informed of the actions taken by the agency to resolve their concerns. There is a need for managers to ensure that children understand how their concerns are being responded to and that this is done in a timely manner.

Since the last inspection, work has been done to ensure better access to interpreter services for children whose first language is not English. This provides them with an opportunity to be more fully involved in reviews and other meetings. It enables them to more fully understand and contribute to the plans and decision-making about the care and support that they receive.

Agency staff and carers undertake work with young people to prepare them for independence. Relevant young people can also attend independence groups with agency staff on a regular basis. This provides them with information and guidance on a range of topics, preparing them for their futures. There is a positive focus on

ensuring that young people have the necessary skills and confidence for their eventual move to adult life.

There is a commendable focus on celebrating the achievements of all children. Carers and agency staff regularly present them with certificates, awards or vouchers for their achievements. Carers take great pride in the progress made by children placed with them. They can clearly describe the progress of the child since moving to live with them. Information is clearly recorded and would be helpful to any child if they accessed their files now or in the future.

The health needs of children are very well met. Managers carefully monitor the health needs of all children and how these are being met. Specialist help is sought and put in place in a timely manner. External professionals speak very positively of the positive progress made by children, particularly in relation to their emotional well-being.

Agency staff ensure that any missing documentation or information is chased with placing authorities from the start of a placement. Managers have implemented a clear escalation process to enable effective challenge to partner agencies. Alongside the introduction of weekly management monitoring meetings, this has enabled carers to access good-quality information about the children they care for.

When considering placing a child, the agency now ensures that it contacts the responsible authority for any other child placed with the same carer. This enables all professionals involved to consider matching issues and assists with placement stability.

Foster carers feel well supported by agency staff and managers. They are happy with their training and development opportunities. They receive regular supervision, which focuses on their professional development and the progress made by children. Delegated authority is sought for each child, providing carers with the confidence to make appropriate decisions. Changes have been made to the supervision format for carers. They now have a much clearer focus on considering how the needs of children are being met. They also now more clearly consider the performance and skills of carers. A member of staff now leads on ensuring that training is attended by carers. He has devised excellent systems for monitoring and tracking the attendance at training. Carers fully understand the expectations on them in relation to continuing professional development and have responded well to the new systems.

Foster carers feel involved in all areas of how the agency runs. They attend carer support groups and some are involved in recently formed foster carer forums. These meetings provide carers with an opportunity to meet with managers, share ideas and raise any concerns. Foster carers recently asked about having identification cards. Senior managers have responded to this request and are in the process of sourcing suitable identification for carers within the agency. This reflects how carers' views and requests are responded to by managers.

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

Children feel safe and protected from harm in their foster placements. Managers have introduced robust management monitoring and review systems so that they can respond more effectively when concerns are identified. Records now more clearly reflect what actions carers and agency staff have taken. Weekly management meetings consider all reported concerns or allegations and ensure that clear and detailed action plans are put in place. This has led to a much improved response to such issues that ensures the safety of children and supports carers.

Local authority designated officers say that they have a positive working relationship with this agency. Records clearly reflect early referrals being made to the designated officer for consideration.

Carers feel well supported in the event of an allegation being made about them. They have access to independent support during the investigative process. Records reflect a comprehensive response by staff and managers, including advising carers clearly of the outcomes of any investigations. If any concerns have been identified in relation to carers during the year, these are now included in their annual review reports and considered as part of the review process.

Risk assessments consider all known or potential risks to children. Agency staff complete them with carers and ensure that they are regularly updated. Managers and agency staff are also working to ensure that risk assessments more clearly state the actions to be taken by carers in response to identified risks. This will further ensure that children are protected from harm.

Incidents of children going missing from care are very low. Staff and carers present as confident and competent in their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Children receive appropriate levels of support following any incidents of going missing. Agency staff and carers also work closely with placing authorities and the police to ensure that all relevant protocols and procedures are followed on each occasion.

Carers support children to take age-appropriate risks. This has included supporting children to use public transport unaided in order to attend schools or to visit family members. This helps them to gain confidence and to feel part of their peer groups.

Support workers provide a valuable service. They carry out specific pieces of work with placed children. This includes work on bullying, keeping safe and identity issues. The support workers also do work with carers' birth children. This is a positive service, supporting both looked after and birth children who form trusting and meaningful relationships with the support workers over time. Carers feel well supported. This assists in placement stability.

Recruitment and assessment processes prevent unsuitable staff or carers from being employed or having the opportunity to harm children. Unannounced visits are made throughout the year by agency staff to carers. This provides an opportunity for staff to elicit the wishes, feelings and views of children. Any concerns raised with the

agency about carers are fully considered through practice concern meetings.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The registered manager has been in post for several years and has the necessary skills, qualifications and experience for the role. Since the last inspection, significant changes have been made to how the agency operates and runs. A large number of staff left following the last inspection. A relatively new staff team has been created, including some new posts.

A large number of shortfalls were identified at the last inspection in 2015 and at a monitoring visit in 2016. The manager and staff have worked very hard to address those shortfalls, with noticeable improvements seen during this inspection. Of the 14 requirements and 18 recommendations made, all but two have been fully met.

Concerns relating to the fostering panel have largely been addressed. However, on one occasion, the panel chair also acted as the panel's qualified social worker. The agency needs to ensure that more robust systems are in place so that such situations do not arise in future. The requirement set at the last inspection in relation to this issue has been reset at this inspection.

A new panel chair has been appointed since the last inspection and presents as highly competent. Panel membership has recently been increased to ensure sufficient skills, experience and independence. Panel members have undertaken detailed training.

Recruitment processes for new panel staff have been improved. This includes better reference verification and criminal record checks for carers and panel members. A member of staff now leads on this to ensure that checks are requested in a timely manner and monitored.

A recommendation was made at the last inspection to ensure that panel members sign an acceptance form to record their agreement to the performance objectives set out by the agency. This recommendation has not been acted on and the previous contract remains in place for panel members.

Written notice and qualifying determinations are now routinely sent out to applicants and approved carers. This was an area of concern identified at the last inspection. Records considered during this inspection reflected that all required processes are now being followed in relation to approval or termination decisions. The agency decision maker has also implemented a new system for recording her decision-making. This now much more clearly sets out the rationale for decisions made following the fostering panel's recommendations.

The manager has devised and implemented a wide range of monitoring and reviewing systems since the last inspection. Managers are now able to demonstrate the progress made by each child placed and their educational progress. An outcomes tracker has recently been introduced. This plots out the starting point and journey of each child in key areas of their development. The tracker has yet to be fully

embedded into agency practice, but is likely to be a very useful means of monitoring progress over time.

Agency staff were very positive about the progress that they have made since the last inspection. They feel proud of their achievements and those of their carers and children. Management support is viewed as positive and strong. Staff receive regular supervision. They report high levels of satisfaction at the training opportunities they have. Staff are encouraged to attend training with carers. This is seen as very positive by both staff and carers.

The agency has a detailed statement of purpose in place. Staff and managers have made significant progress since the last inspection and are now ensuring that the service is conducted at all times in a manner which is consistent with the statement of purpose. Children receive a welcome bag at the start of their placement. Support workers in the team visit children to share this with them, give them a copy of the children's guide and to make sure that they know how to make a complaint. This is a very personalised method of ensuring that children feel supported from the start of their placement.

## **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:** SC053859

**Registered provider:** Jay Fostering Limited 04822721

**Registered provider address:** Frays Court, 71 Cowley Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 2AE

**Responsible individual:** Iain Anderson

**Registered manager:** Deborah Saysell

**Telephone number:** 0116 277 0066

**Email address:** enquiries@jayfostering.com

## **Inspector(s)**

Tracy Murty: social care inspector

Ros Chapman: social care inspector



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