

Foster for Bradford, Bradford Children and Families Trust

Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Sir Henry Mitchell House, 4 Manchester Road, Bradford BD5 0QL

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency registered in April 2023 under a trust arrangement. The service operates from offices in Bradford. The manager also registered in April 2023.

The agency undertakes the assessment, approval and supervision of foster carers who provide a wide range of placements to children and young people. This includes respite care, permanent, short-term and long-term placements, connected carers arrangements, PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) and 'staying put' arrangements.

At the time of this visit, the fostering service had 542 approved foster carers providing placements for 717 children and young people.

The inspector was aware during this visit of a serious incident concerning a child that had occurred. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the registered provider in response to the incident were considered (where appropriate) alongside other evidence available at the time of the visit to inform the inspector's judgements.

Inspection date: 21 November 2023

Date of previous inspection: not applicable

This monitoring visit

The purpose of this visit was to seek some assurances from the agency in relation to its response to several safeguarding notifications.

During this visit, the inspector spoke to the responsible individual, the registered manager, fostering manager, three fostering social workers, a foster carer, and a representative from the Bradford Independent Foster Care Association. No serious or widespread concerns were identified during this visit.

The foster carers were previously approved by the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council fostering service. Following the transfer of ownership from Bradford local authority to Bradford Children and Families Trust, all the existing foster carers were presented to the new agency's fostering panel for approval. This process has provided the trust with independent scrutiny of the foster carers and their conditions of registration. When shortfalls are found, the trust ensures that each foster carer has an individual action plan. The fostering panel and agency managers have oversight of this to ensure that foster carers meet the necessary standards for continued approval.

Not all foster carers have received the relevant training to meet the standards for foster care within the agreed time frame. Furthermore, some foster carers have not received refresher training, including first-aid training. However, those foster carers who are caring for children with additional health needs receive bespoke training and support from health professionals.

Currently, foster carers only have access to online training. There is no system that allows managers oversight of the training needs of all their foster carers. The agency has recruited a learning and development officer for fostering. This person is not yet in post but has been appointed to address the shortfalls with foster carers' training and development.

Leaders and managers have implemented some new systems for monitoring and auditing purposes. This includes a spreadsheet with oversight of the timeliness of the assessment of foster carers. Family and friends foster carers are not currently presented to panel within the statutory timescales. To address this, the agency has recruited additional social workers to carry out these assessments. These staff are new in post and have not yet been able to have an impact on the backlog.

Leaders and managers share any concerns about the agency's foster carers with other safeguarding professionals. This provides a multi-agency approach to determine whether it is safe for children to remain with their current carers. Prompt action is taken for children to move to alternative carers, if appropriate.

A multi-agency enquiry meeting has assisted the agency to identify any new learning following concerns raised about a foster carer. This has led to improvements with the management of allegations process. Staff and foster carers receive information about the action they should take if an allegation is made. Managers also meet bi-monthly to track and monitor any allegations or concerns about the standard of care.

The managers have not always notified Ofsted of safeguarding concerns in a timely way. This includes not providing an update following a safeguarding investigation. To address this, the supervising social workers and foster carers receive guidance and training about their responsibilities. The provider has also adapted their computer recording system so that managers are alerted at an earlier stage to any serious incidents. It is too early to look at whether this has addressed the delay in notifying the regulator.

Although shortfalls were found at this visit, the leaders and managers are already aware of these and have plans in place to address them.

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, The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. In respect of updating following the conclusion of the S47 investigation. (Regulation 36 (1))	30 December 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers receive sufficient training on health and hygiene issues and first aid, with particular emphasis on health promotion and communicable diseases. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 6.7)
- The registered person should ensure that all foster carers, including all members of a household who are approved foster carers, are supported to achieve the children's workforce development council's training, support and development standards for foster care. Short-break carers who are approved foster carers should be supported to achieve the training support and development standards for short-break carers. Family and friends foster carers should be supported to achieve the training, support and development standards for family and friends foster carers. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.2)
- The registered person should ensure that where a family and friends foster carer is temporarily approved as a foster carer under regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, a full assessment is carried out as soon as practicable, where the intention is for the child to stay with the carer, and always within the statutory time frame set out in the regulations. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 30.14)

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: 2725774

Registered provider: Bradford Children and Families Trust

Registered provider address: Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Sir Henry Mitchell House, 4 Manchester Road, Bradford BD5 0QL

Responsible individual: Amandip Johal

Registered manager: Linzi Nicholson

Inspector

Tina Ruffles, Social Care Inspector

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