

Capstone Foster Care (South East) Limited

Capstone Foster Care (South East) Ltd
Capstone Foster Care, 28 The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham, West Midlands B38 8SD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency is one of the registered branches of Capstone Foster Care. The registered office is based in Birmingham and covers the West and East Midlands region. It provides a range of fostering placements. These include parent and child, emergency, short- and long-term placements.

Inspection dates: 9 to 13 October 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: n/a

Overall judgement at last inspection: n/a

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Children are safe.
- Children live with committed foster carers. As a result, children benefit from stable placements.
- Committed staff support foster carers very well. Consequently, carers feel valued.
- Leaders and managers demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service.
- Managers have effective monitoring systems. They use these to monitor children's progress and safety.
- An independent, robust panel challenges the agency effectively.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development :

- Children do not benefit from individualised independence plans.
- Panel members do not attend joint training with staff.
- Children's records do not show their addresses prior to living with their foster carers or after they leave.
- Foster carers do not benefit from personal development plans.

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
The fostering service provider must maintain and keep up to date the records specified in Schedule 2. (Regulation 22 (1))	24/11/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that 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 caring for young people who are approaching adulthood. Arrangements are consistent with the young person's care plan, including their placement plan, pathway plan and transition plan for children with disabilities and special educational needs. (NMS 12.3)
- Ensure that foster carers' personal development plans set out how they will be supported to undertake ongoing training and development that is appropriate to their development needs and experience. (NMS 20.5)
- Ensure that each person on the central list is given the opportunity of attending an annual joint training day with the fostering service's fostering staff. (NMS 23.10)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The agency provides a range of different types of placements for children. This includes short-term, long-term and parent and child placements. When children reach 18 years of age, they remain living with their foster families under 'staying put' arrangements. The registered manager and staff recognise the attachments that children make with foster carers and enable these to continue into adulthood.

Children make good progress from their starting points and enjoy safe placements with foster carers who meet their needs well. Foster carers are well supported in caring for the children placed with them. A foster carer described the support that they receive as 'excellent' and the training as 'brilliant'. A psychologist offers additional training and support to develop carers' skills further. One foster carer explained that this support has given them the ability 'to think outside the box, which has been really helpful'.

Children make positive progress in their education, and their health improves. Foster carers value healthy lifestyles and promote exercise and balanced diets. Children who have learning and physical disabilities live with foster carers who advocate for them. Carers make sure that children have access to the specialist health input that they need. Foster carers challenge education professionals when children do not have a suitable education placement or do not receive the support that they require. For example, a foster carer sought an alternative school placement for her child who did not speak English. The child's English has significantly improved. Consequently, they are starting to achieve academically and socially.

Children do not always benefit from individually tailored support to help them develop their independence skills. Foster carers support children in this area by encouraging cooking, budgeting and laundry. However, managers have recognised that this support and planning requires further development in order to meet individual children's needs. Consequently, children are not receiving the full support that they require for their move into adulthood. A foster carer is currently trialling a new programme to support children working towards independence.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities. For example, horse riding, attending local clubs, and going on holiday with their foster families. These activities improve children's confidence, increase their social skills and provide them with opportunities to discover new interests. A child said, 'I go out to lots of exciting places. We're a real family.'

The majority of children move to their foster families in a planned way. The agency provides children with information about their foster carers before they move in. Similarly, unplanned placement endings are rare. When they do occur, staff and foster carers use the experience as a learning opportunity, identifying how they could prevent this in the future.

Foster carers feel well supported. Managers and staff value all family members and consider their views. A foster carer said, 'They really care about the well-being of the foster family.' Managers actively respond to children's feedback. For example, providing days out in the school holidays so that the family can spend quality time together.

Foster carers understand how important it is for children to continue relationships with their family and friends. Carers support children to maintain these relationships in a safe and planned way. Children enjoy having their friends over for sleepovers and dinner. Children's confidence, self-esteem and social skills all improve because of this.

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

Staff and foster carers receive ongoing training in safeguarding and protecting children. Consequently, staff and foster carers know, understand and follow the correct safeguarding procedures. Some children are at risk of radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. Foster carers and staff work collaboratively with partner agencies to make sure that children are protected. Foster carers are aware of the risks at the beginning of each placement. Risks are regularly reviewed and risk assessments updated accordingly. This holistic approach ensures that children are safe.

The registered manager manages allegations against foster carers effectively. This includes liaising with placing authorities and other safeguarding professionals. Carers are fully supported when allegations are made and have access to independent professional support. Some allegations result in reviews for foster carers that identify areas for development and training needs. However, foster carers do not benefit from a personal development plan that identifies their ongoing training needs. This has the potential to affect the skills that the carers have and their ongoing professional development.

Foster carers, panel members and agency staff are recruited safely. A strong and rigorous panel is in place. The panel chair is highly experienced. The panel has rigorous oversight of the assessments of potential foster carers and their reviews. After safeguarding allegations have been made, foster carers return to panel for an early review. The panel members challenge the agency when they do not feel that assessments are good enough or when they have concerns. This demonstrates an independent and effective panel. On occasion, the agency decision-maker has not agreed with panel recommendations about foster carers. This demonstrates that the agency's systems for approving and reviewing foster carers are effective. Panel members receive annual training. However, this has not been together with agency staff. This has not had an impact on children's safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The agency is part of a large national organisation. This is the agency's first inspection since registering in its own right in October 2016. Prior to this, it had been operating under a different registration.

The registered manager is appropriately qualified and experienced. Together with the responsible individual, he provides clear leadership and direction. Staff and foster carers said that managers are visible, approachable and have made some positive changes.

Since registration, the registered manager has implemented many positive changes and monitoring practices in the agency. He recognises that some of the changes will take time to embed fully. The registered manager is now able to use monitoring systems to focus on children's progress and improve the quality of care that they receive. These recently introduced systems identify the strengths and weaknesses of the service while taking into account children's views.

All staff consulted felt well supported and enjoyed working for the agency. They receive regular professional supervision where they reflect on their practice and receive guidance and support. Managers develop good working relationships with external agencies, including placing authorities. This is reflected in positive feedback from professionals.

All information relating to the service is clear and outlined in the statement of purpose and the children's guide. Managers ensure that they are meeting their aims and objectives.

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: 1237336

Registered provider: Capstone Foster Care (South East) Ltd

Registered provider address: Beech House, Wootton St Lawrence, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG23 8PE

Responsible individual: Sara Chambers Ross

Registered manager: Christopher Crocker

Telephone number: 01213 742 650

Email address: chris.crocker@capstonefostercare.co.uk

Inspectors

Sandra King, social care inspector
Anne Daly, social care inspector



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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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