

# Park Foster Care

Park Foster Care Ltd

Park Foster Care Ltd, 5 Ridgehouse Drive, Festival Park, Hanley, Stoke-On-Trent, Staffordshire ST1 5TL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Park Foster Care is a privately owned independent fostering agency. It is part of the CareTech Group. A suitably qualified and experienced registered manager has led the agency since 2016. The agency provides emergency, respite, short-term, medium-term and long-term placements for children.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had 51 fostering households, who were caring for 75 children.

### Inspection dates: 12 to 16 June 2023

**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 April 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

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

The agency makes a positive difference to children's lives. Children receive good-quality individualised care. Careful matching, together with the agency's ongoing support, contributes to a high percentage of placement stability. As a result, children thrive and make good progress.

The quality of children's day-to-day experiences is good. Children are welcomed into their foster families' homes and take part in family activities, such as local shopping trips and visits to see extended family. Children have the opportunity to invite their friends to spend time in their home, and children join their foster families on holiday.

Children make good progress in all aspects of their lives. They attend education and are meeting academic targets. Children are active members of clubs and community-based activities. They are encouraged to maintain or take up new interests and hobbies, such as trampolining, swimming, football, boxing and youth clubs. Foster carers work closely with other professionals, such as teachers, social workers and health consultants. As a result, the children's needs are being identified and met, and children are making positive achievements from their starting points.

Foster carers provide children with healthy lifestyles. Foster carers are acutely aware of the additional needs of the children, and ensure that children are provided with the health services to meet each individual need.

Children's views are understood and taken into account. They complete annual consultation forms about their care. They give feedback through the use of the 'Mind Of My Own' app, and foster carers work with the agency to ensure that children's recommendations are acted on. Depending on their age and understanding, children take part in their statutory meetings and contribute to their care planning arrangements.

Foster carers make sure that children feel part of the family. At the same time, foster carers understand the importance of children maintaining positive relationships with their parents. Children benefit from seeing their foster carers' respect for their parents and that they work in partnership with their parents.

Children's social workers value the support that children receive from their foster carers. Foster carers recognise the importance of care planning to support children to feel secure in their homes now and in the future. Several children continue to live with their foster families after their 18th birthday. They receive encouragement while they are studying or training. This helps to support children to prepare for adulthood.

Foster carers describe receiving great support from their supervising social workers. Foster carers advocate for the children, and the supervising social workers support

them to challenge placing authorities when needed. This results in children receiving individualised care that leads to the best outcomes for them.

The agency has yet to replace their clinician, who was instrumental in providing foster carers with support and training that helped to deliver the 'Park's Parenting Approach'. Foster carers and supervising social workers informed the inspectors of the gap that this has left in the trauma-informed approach. For example, managers have had to address a foster carer for the use of punitive sanctions. The foster carer did not understand why the consequence was deemed to be inappropriate. Managers are attempting to fill this void with the employment of a therapeutic social worker and support from a therapeutic sister agency.

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

Children are kept safe and are well cared for by proactive foster carers. When safeguarding concerns have been identified, leaders and managers have taken appropriate action. This includes liaising with other agencies and carrying out investigations when necessary. These investigations are well recorded and identify areas for development, such as further training and support to meet the needs of children in their care.

Children know their supervising social worker well. Social workers visit children regularly and speak to them alone. This offers children another trusted adult to share any concerns with.

Children rarely go missing from their foster carers' care. When this does happen, the appropriate action is taken to ensure that the child is safely returned home. The cohesive partnerships between professionals help to ensure that any child at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation receives early help.

Allegations against foster carers are managed in a timely and effective manner. Records are clear and learning is threaded back into practice and the whole fostering network. Peer learning and support through the fostering support group enable open dialogue between foster carers and encourage increased communication as another form of support and debrief for one another.

Recruitment practices are thorough for staff and foster carers. Assessments of potential foster carers are comprehensive. This includes helping to prepare foster carers' birth children for the realities of fostering, and carefully exploring foster carers' support networks. The panel provides appropriate scrutiny that helps to select suitable foster carers with the skills and resilience required to provide children with safety and stability.

Children live in foster homes that are at a suitable standard. Children are afforded clean and safe homes. Supervising social workers complete unannounced visits that provide them with a level of oversight, and they also complete health and safety assessments annually. However, foster carers have not completed health and safety

training, which may impact on their knowledge of how to maintain the safety of their home.

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

This agency benefits from a compassionate, determined, and pragmatic registered manager. An equally passionate and child-focused practice manager supports them.

The fostering service's statement of purpose is comprehensive and remains up to date. It describes the service's aims and objectives clearly. The two children's guides provide children with creative and clear information in age-appropriate language.

Staff feel valued and well supported by their managers. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to the children and foster carers whom they support. This well-established team provides stability to children and their foster carers.

Foster carers are suitably trained to meet the specific needs of the children. They use their learning from training courses and apply this to safeguard children. For example, internet safety risks are well understood, and foster carers implement strategies to keep children safe online.

Staff and foster carers receive regular supervision sessions. These sessions provide constant and effective challenge, direction and action. In addition, supervision sessions demonstrate how effective oversight and leadership are improving the agency and its outcomes for children.

The leadership team knows the strengths and weaknesses of the agency and takes action to maintain its development. The registered manager completes a quarterly management review of the service for senior leaders. Children's progress trackers are incorporated into this to monitor the progress of each child. This results in improved outcomes for children.

Despite this, the monitoring of the electronic recording system fails to highlight that not all of the health and safety assessment forms are accurate. This is an area that requires improvement in order to improve the efficiency of the service.

The annual review process is thorough. This promotes the regular review of foster carers' suitability to continue to care for children.

The agency's fostering panel operates effectively and benefits from having membership that made up of people from a diverse range of professional backgrounds. The panel undertakes clear and appropriate analysis of the work presented at panel meetings. The administration of the fostering panel is effective, and panel meeting minutes are sufficiently detailed.

The agency decision-maker (ADM) has good experience and is suitably qualified for the role. The ADM provides a clear rationale when approving foster carers. The ADM will question the panel's decision, if required, and offers guidance for further

learning. This gives further assurance that the foster carers who are recruited have the skills and resilience to care for children and keep them safe. The ADM, who is employed solely on a sessional basis, does not get involved in any other aspects of the agency's work and so has little standing or influence on this.

During the inspection, managers were quick to address all areas of development highlighted. This shows that the leadership is effective and leaders strive for improvement.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Foster carers are trained in health and safety issues and have guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities. Avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a family home. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', page 22, paragraph 10.3)
- The fostering service's decision-maker is a senior person within the fostering service, or is a trustee or director of the fostering service, who is a social worker with at least three years post-qualifying experience in childcare social work and has knowledge of childcare law and practice. In particular, the registered person must ensure that if the agency decision-maker is employed on a sessional basis, it is clear how they are engaged in the agency to continue to support the agency's capacity to promote the needs of the children fostered by the agency. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', page 48, paragraph 23.12)
- The registered person should have a system in place to monitor record-keeping and take action when required. This specifically relates to ensuring that health and safety records that are uploaded onto the electronic recording system are correct. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', page 52, 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:** SC055725

**Registered provider:** Park Foster Care Ltd

**Registered provider address:** 5th Floor Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane,  
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## **Inspectors**

Kev Brammer, Social Care Inspector (Lead)  
Helen Dunn, Social Care Inspector

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