

New Chapters Fostercare Agency

New Chapters Fostercare Limited

The Old Police Station, Tudor Way, Shifnal, Shropshire TF11 8DJ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

New Chapters Fostercare is an independent fostering agency registered in 2015. There are three directors of the company: one is the registered manager, one is the responsible individual and the other is the head of therapy. The agency undertakes recruitment, assessment, approval and support of foster carers. The agency currently has 36 fostering families and 44 children placed.

Inspection dates: 9 to 13 March 2020

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 15 August 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are at the heart of this service. Managers, staff and foster carers demonstrate a huge amount of passion, ambition and commitment to ensuring that children achieve the best outcomes possible and improve their life chances. As a result, children make exceptional progress from their starting points. They experience stable family life and form extremely positive relationships with their foster carers.

Foster carers feel that the agency's managers, staff team and therapist provide them with practical support (as well as theory and research-based solutions), which enables them to develop resilient relationships with children. For example, a family support worker helps children and carers understand issues such as self-harm, emotional regulation and internet safety.

Foster carers benefit from a high level of support, including a responsive out-of-hours service. The range and quality of training available to foster carers are exceptional. Training is used to improve foster carers' understanding and competence and, thereby, the care and support that they provide to children. Managers commission high-calibre trainers. Foster carers told the inspectors that the training is 'amazing'.

Placement matching is very well considered, and the low level of disruption is testament to this. Managers are passionate about making good and successful matches, and staff are very diligent in trying to get as much information as possible about a child prior to their arrival. For one child, extensive planning was undertaken with the foster carers prior to her placement. This included making significant adaptations to their home. This enabled the child to move from a residential setting into a family environment where she has thrived.

Children receive child-friendly profiles of the carers prior to moving in whenever possible. This provides them with reassurance and helps them to settle. Children also receive age-appropriate welcome boxes with information about the agency, as well as a few carefully chosen gifts, such as colouring pens and a therapeutic colouring book.

Foster carers are supported to ensure that children's health needs are met to the highest standard. Foster carers benefit from extensive training that encompasses all aspects of a child's development, including their emotional and psychological well-being. Foster carers have an excellent understanding of the therapeutic parenting approach used by the agency. They benefit from regular consultation with the agency's therapist. For one family, the agency commissioned an independent assessment to look at what support was needed to enable them to continue to care for two children with very complex health needs. As a result of this assessment, a bespoke package of support was agreed and implemented.

Children benefit from a stable, happy family life. They feel genuinely loved and cared about, fully integrated into family life, listened to, understood and respected. A young person commented, 'Living with my carer is the best thing that has ever happened to me.' Children engage in a wide variety of activities, such as becoming members of clubs, going to the gym, playing football, cycling, meeting friends and being part of family events, such as holidays. Foster carers also support the development of independent living skills, so children are fully prepared for adulthood.

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

Safeguarding is a top priority in this agency. Managers are fully aware of all issues that affect the safety and well-being of children and take appropriate action. They demonstrate an impressive knowledge of individual children and their circumstances. When risks are identified, there is a strong and effective response.

Leaders, managers, staff and foster carers have an excellent understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, and the roles of safeguarding agencies. The designated officer for the relevant local authority is contacted for advice when there is an allegation or concern about a carer's practice. Managers make sure that children are protected during any investigation and also provide foster carers with access to independent support, in recognition of the emotional impact that this has on them. The agency also pays for carers to access a counselling service if required. A foster carer told the inspectors, 'The support has been excellent, I couldn't have asked for more and the counselling sessions were invaluable.'

Managers take robust action when there are concerns about a foster carer's practice. Managers use learning from serious case reviews to improve their practice. Foster carers return to panel six months after their approval. This independent oversight identifies progress and ensures that foster carers receive the support and training that they need to develop.

A research-based therapeutic model underpins the care and support that foster carers provide. This model informs the assessment and approval process for carers, and is the basis for the training, supervision and support that they receive. Foster carers also have consultations with the agency's therapist and an accredited practitioner commissioned by the agency. These sessions help carers to understand the reasons for children's behaviour and to respond in a more therapeutic way. Physical intervention is used rarely.

The agency uses research to inform its response to children's behaviours and understand their responses to trauma, loss and attachment. When necessary, the agency supports families to secure more specialist packages of support through commissioned arrangements with external providers.

Children feel safe and protected from harm. They have a variety of ways that they can contact adults if they have any concerns about their placement. The supervising

social workers visit children at least every six weeks, in addition to the visits they undertake to supervise the foster carers. Children have written information in their welcome packs about who they can contact; this includes a complaint form with a stamped addressed envelope. Children spoke to the inspectors during the inspection. They were unanimous in their positive views about the relationships that they have with the staff from the agency. They identified that these relationships are often more significant and consistent than those with their own social workers.

Safe recruitment processes for staff, panel members and foster carers help to ensure the suitability of these people to work with or care for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Ambitious managers have a clear vision of what constitutes excellence and innovation. The staff team is stable, experienced and highly motivated. This combination has led to innovative and creative practice, achieving the best possible outcomes for children.

There is a culture of high expectations and an admirable commitment to children. This ethos is underpinned by managers who provide staff with strong supervision and guidance. This helps staff to reflect on their practice and focus on helping children to thrive in their fostering placement.

Staff practice is underpinned by a strong theoretical base, enhanced by an awareness of research and current practice developments. For example, during the assessment of prospective foster carers, consideration is given to the impact of their adult attachment styles and whether they are conducive to parenting foster children.

The agency is a learning organisation. Managers and staff reflect on things that have not gone well in order to improve practice. Managers have strong quality assurance systems and closely monitor performance. These systems include regular audits, reflective practice sessions and evaluation of the fostering panel. The panel also reports regularly on the progress of the agency. An independent reviewing officer completes foster carer reviews and actively challenges when necessary. This ensures that children have the experiences and resources that they need to reach their full potential.

Panel members bring a range of experience of fostering, both personal and professional. The panel chair is suitably experienced and knowledgeable. The foster panel provides a robust quality assurance function, while being sensitive to the applicants attending panel. Panel members provide feedback to the agency on a regular basis on the quality of reports and the presentation of social workers. This enables managers and staff to address any issues swiftly. Managers keep panel members informed of developments in the agency, and panel members can attend regular training events. This helps to ensure that panel members keep up to date with changes in practice.

Proactive and imaginative work with other professionals enhances children's lives and ensures that they receive very high levels of individualised support, and the services that they need.

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: SC487945

Registered provider: New Chapters FosterCare Limited

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Inspectors

Annemarie Parker, Social Care Inspector
Joanna Warburton, Social Care Inspector

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