

# Fostering Hearts Limited

Fostering Hearts Limited

The Maylands Building, Maylands Avenue, Hemel Hempstead Industrial Estate, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP2 7TG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency is part of a wider organisation that recruits, assesses, approves, trains and supports foster carers. The agency was registered in May 2020 and is expanding to offer a range of placements in regions north of London, including Essex, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Luton and Northampton. At the time of this inspection, the agency was supporting seven fostering families and six children.

The manager registered with Ofsted when the agency established in May 2020.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

**Inspection dates:** 14 to 18 February 2022

**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:** not applicable

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** not applicable

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** not applicable

## Inspection judgements

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

Children are settled with their foster carers and are making good progress. Children said that they feel safe and cared for.

Staff and foster carers maintain a strong focus on helping children with their education and learning. Children have been inspired to read for fun as part of the agency-led book club. All children have an education provision. Foster carers are supported by their supervising social worker and a dedicated education consultant to ensure that children have the help and resources that they need to progress in school.

Children are encouraged to develop aspirations for their future. Managers have set up a task force with the purpose of ensuring that children access experiences and learning that help them achieve their chosen goals. For example, one child who likes computers has attended a coding event and another child was supported to work towards their goal of working with horses.

Foster carers ensure that children's mental health needs are considered in all planning, including in children's personal education plans. Foster carers are sensitive to the experiences and emotional needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Foster carers are alert to meeting children's identity needs, particularly when they do not share the same ethnicity, culture or religion. Foster carers explore food, cultural events and language with children to help them to maintain or develop a stronger sense of identity.

Many of the fostering households have the capacity to keep brothers and sisters together. One child said that their foster home is good because they can live with their brothers. Foster carers support children to maintain relationships with their parents and extended family. This includes inviting family members to special events and facilitating time together. When possible, foster carers have helped with plans for children to return to their birth family.

Children enjoy hobbies and activities based on their likes and aspirations. The agency facilitates events throughout the year which children are encouraged to attend. Foster carers place an emphasis on helping children to make and sustain friendships.

Matching decisions are informed by the supervising social worker, who knows the fostering household well. The agency works well with placing local authorities to ensure that they have the information that they need at the point of referral. The agency consults with children's social workers about any changes to the composition of the fostering household. However, matching reports are not always fully completed and do not explore how a new child joining the home may affect birth children.

The agency ensures that children have the information that they need when they move into the fostering household. When needed, this is translated into different languages. Children do not currently have access to read their records. Senior managers are exploring a digital solution which will provide children with access to a virtual memory box.

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

There have been minimal safeguarding incidents since the agency registered. One incident of a child not returning home as expected was responded to appropriately by the foster carer with the support of their supervising social worker.

Foster carers benefit from out-of-hours support. This is provided by supervising social workers and managers who know the children well.

Children say that they would talk to their foster carers if they had any worries. Foster carers help children to learn about healthy and safe relationships and have acted quickly to address any concerns such as social media use or peer pressure.

Foster carers allow children to take age-appropriate risks. Children have unsupervised time in the community and can experience being home alone. This helps children to gain confidence in their ability to manage situations independently. When needed, the education consultant offers children one-to-one support to improve their independence skills.

Managers have implemented effective systems for maintaining detailed oversight of the risks that foster carers are managing. The levels of risk are regularly reviewed and discussed at management level. Supervising social workers ensure that each fostering household has a safer caring plan that provides guidance on how to reduce risk and keep individual children safe. However, plans are not always updated promptly following an increase in risk or change in household composition.

There has been one allegation against a foster carer. Managers responded in line with the agency's safeguarding procedures and worked with the local authority designated officer and the placing local authority to ensure the child's immediate safety.

The agency has established an experienced and diverse fostering panel that contributes to the careful scrutiny of prospective foster carers. The agency decision-maker has expertise in fostering and social work research which helps to inform decisions about the suitability of carers.

Foster carers complete training identified by the agency as mandatory, including paediatric first aid and safeguarding training. Foster carers have up-to-date personal development plans that identify training that is relevant to the children they are caring for. Foster carers' attendance at training is tracked by their supervising social worker and at management level.

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

Managers and staff are appropriately qualified, experienced and child-focused. Managers have established a culture of high aspirations for children. Children's views and experiences are central to the processes and practices that managers have developed in their service. This includes providing children with a dedicated education consultant and advocate.

Supervising social workers invest time in building relationships with all the children in the household. This means that they have a good knowledge of the needs and views of all the individuals in the fostering household, including foster carers' own children.

Supervising social workers have small caseloads. As a result, foster carers receive a good level of supervision and support. Supervising social workers provide sensitive challenge when needed to ensure that foster carers are acting in the children's best interests.

Managers have developed a process for reflecting on unplanned endings with foster carers. Learning from this is used to improve matching decisions and inform training plans.

Staff feel well supported by the registered manager and senior managers. They receive regular supervision and appraisals of their performance. Staff access training that enhances their expertise in supporting foster carers and meeting the needs of children in care.

Managers know the children and foster carers well. Records contain clear management oversight of cases direction and risk. Managers have implemented effective systems that will help them maintain oversight of the service as the agency grows.

The registered manager regularly reviews the quality of the service. However, this is not informed by the children's feedback that is regularly gathered by the agency. An innovative improvement plan is in place to support the growth of the agency.

Senior managers are committed to developing and sharing good practice within the agency and more widely. This includes working with fostering organisations and other fostering providers to respond to emerging issues. Managers have helped to develop training in relation to 'meeting the needs of unaccompanied minors' and 'talking to children about racism' that is freely available to other organisations. Managers also contributed to good practice guidance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 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
<p>The registered person must maintain a system for—</p> <p>improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority). (Regulation 35 (1)(b) (3))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the fostering agency using consultation with children, foster carers and placing authorities to inform its evaluation of the quality of the service.</p>	<p>18 August 2022</p>

### Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's safety and welfare is promoted in all fostering placements. In particular, the fostering provider should ensure that safer caring household plans are updated promptly following a change in risk or household composition. Also, ensure that matching reports are fully completed, taking into account the needs of all children in the fostering household, including birth children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 14, paragraph 4.2)
- The registered person should ensure that children are actively encouraged to read their files, other than necessarily confidential information or third-party information, and to correct errors and add personal statements. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 52, paragraph 26.6)

### 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:** 2572055

**Registered provider:** Fostering Hearts Limited

**Registered provider address:** The Maylands Building, Maylands Avenue, Hemel Hempstead Industrial Estate, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP2 7TG

**Responsible individual:** Melanie Yearwood

**Registered manager:** Rahima Kadir

**Telephone number:** 01442 979087

**Email address:** [info@fosteringhearts.co.uk](mailto:info@fosteringhearts.co.uk)

## Inspectors

Paula Edwards, Social Care Inspector

Laraine Edmondson, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022