

Children of Colour Ltd

Children of Colour Ltd

102-116 Windmill Road, Croydon CR0 2XQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency is based in the London Borough of Croydon. It provides emergency, respite, short-term and long-term foster care for children aged from two to 18 years.

At the time of this inspection, there were 22 approved fostering households, caring for 24 children. One young adult was also living with their foster carers under a staying put arrangement.

The agency registered in May 2004. The manager registered at the same time.

Inspection dates: 11 to 15 July 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 9 August 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The agency provides a good fostering service. Children receive highly individualised support and make good progress across their lives.

The agency makes effective matching decisions. Foster carers are able to meet the needs of children who come to live with them. This includes children with highly complex needs and past traumatic experiences. When necessary, the agency makes sure that the foster carers receive additional support and training to ensure that they can meet the child's needs.

The agency works together with all professionals to ensure that children's needs are holistically met. An example of this is the close working with health professionals to ensure that the foster carers for a child with specific health conditions and disabilities have the specialist skills and equipment to meet the child's needs.

The agency's foster carers are able to form close and trusting relationships with children. This helps children to develop a sense of belonging. All four children talked to spoke highly about their experiences.

The agency is ambitious for children and approves foster carers who value education. Children's school attendance, engagement with learning and attainment are high. For example, one child is head girl at her school and she is planning to go to university. Two young people, who have left their staying put arrangements, studied accountancy.

Foster carers provide clear boundaries and emotional warmth to children. This enables children to develop a sense of security and the skills to manage difficult emotions. Children's behaviours improve over time, and this helps them to develop positive relationships with other children and adults.

Foster carers ensure that children have opportunities to develop their interests and have fun. Children engage in various activities of their choice, such as basketball, karate and music. Foster carers help children to have their say and confidently express their choices.

The agency provides stability in children's lives. In one case in the last 12 months, this agency's foster carers became special guardians for two children who they had fostered. Some children have been matched permanently with their foster families. Some young adults who have moved to live independently stay close to their foster families and visit them regularly. This shows the positive and long-lasting bond that children form with their foster families.

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

The agency is effective at keeping children safe and protected. There have been no major safeguarding incidents or concerns since the last inspection. Children have developed a sense of safety and security. All children spoken to said that they feel safe.

The professionals spoken to did not have any concerns about the children currently placed with this agency or with the agency's practices. The professionals commented positively about the agency's contribution to joint working to safeguard children.

The local police provided training to foster carers on how to safely deal with incidents without criminalising children. The agency is familiar with the local multi-agency protocol for safeguarding children when they are missing from home or absent without authority. Children said that they liked being with their foster families and, at the time of the inspection, none of the children go missing from home.

All foster families have their own safe care plan, which is updated every time a new foster child joins their family. These plans are usually agreed between the primary foster carer and the supervising social workers. However, the other household members do not have the opportunity to contribute to these plans and this could potentially affect their understanding of and commitment to the plan.

All children have individual risk assessments and safety plans. However, the assessments of the online risks to children are limited. Online safety risk assessments are an area for improvement.

Foster carers receive training on a number of safeguarding topics. This helps them to understand the risks and know how to protect children. However, foster carers would benefit from training on online safety, radicalisation, female genital mutilation, honour-based violence and forced marriage. Although all members of the fostering households are invited to training, it is only recently that the agency required that all members attend.

The agency vets all staff before appointing them. However, they do not keep records to demonstrate that they have explored gaps in employment histories and verified references.

The agency has good links with the local authority's designated safeguarding lead for dealing with allegations (LADSL). However, when a complainant made a comment that the leaders and managers were not safeguarding children, this was not shared with the LADSL until the inspection. An independent fostering organisation completed the investigation and found this allegation to be unsubstantiated.

The agency has contributed to the child safeguarding practice review relating to a serious incident that happened in May 2021. The agency is waiting for the outcome of this review for any learning points.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

A stable leadership and management team ensures that the agency fulfils its statement of purpose. Leaders and managers provide a fostering service which is in line with the agency's conditions of registration in relation to the age of children.

Leaders and managers are child-focused. They monitor children's experiences and outcomes effectively. They are aspirational about what children can achieve and make sure that the foster carers are supported to enable children to make progress.

The foster carers spoken to are appreciative of the support that they receive from the agency. They spoke highly about their supervising social workers and the agency as a whole. When foster carers were asked if the agency could do anything more to support them and the children better, they said that they could not think of anything.

Staff supervision, team meetings and training provide opportunities for staff to reflect on and develop their fostering practices. All staff receive an annual review of their performance. However, the registered manager has never had an appraisal.

The agency has improved since the previous inspection. Leaders, managers and staff ensure that announced monthly visits to fostering households, as well as weekly phone calls and unannounced visits, take place regularly and focus on safeguarding children.

However, quality assurance is still weak in some aspects of the service and is an area that requires improvement. The agency's annual review of the quality of the service does not include any analysis and evaluation of the agency's information or stakeholders' views. The annual review for the year ending March 2022 was not sent to Ofsted in a timely manner and was only made available to Ofsted during the inspection.

The agency's practice is not always sufficiently evidence based. The agency's leaders and managers do not always identify shortfalls in records. For example, there is no healthcare plan for a child who has profound health needs and is on medication. However, this information is available in other records. Other examples include shortfalls in the assessment of a prospective foster carer and some approved foster carers' reviews. Some annual reviews of foster carers' suitability were not completed in a timely manner.

The agency's fostering panel and the agency's decision-maker (ADM) are completely independent from the agency. They make a strong contribution to the agency's quality assurance processes and improvement journey. The ADM and the panel provide clear feedback to the agency on a regular basis and help them to track the progress that is being made.

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 in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (a))</p> <p>Specifically, the registered person must ensure that children's individual risk assessments and the safe care plans for the fostering households are co-produced with all relevant parties as far as possible, and that the agency improves online safety awareness.</p>	1 October 2022
<p>The registered person must maintain a system for improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.</p> <p>The registered person must provide the Chief Inspector with a written report in respect of any review conducted for the purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to any local authority.</p> <p>The system 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)(2)(3))</p> <p>Specifically, the registered person must ensure that stakeholders are consulted and their feedback is reflected in the report. Reports must be sent to Ofsted as required.</p>	1 October 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that there is a healthcare plan for individual children with complex health needs and on medication. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 6.1)

- The registered person should ensure through its quality assurance processes that all relevant information is made available to the fostering panel when they are considering their recommendations relating to approval and continued approval of foster carers and that the approvals are reviewed on at least an annual basis. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 13.7)
- The registered person should ensure that there is a clear record of their conversations with prospective staff about any gaps in their employment and when the agency verifies their references. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 19.1)
- The registered person should ensure that all members of the fostering household receive training on a wide range of safeguarding topics, including online safety, female genital mutilation, honour-based violence, forced marriage and radicalisation. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.9)
- The registered person should ensure that low-level safeguarding concerns against professionals are also brought to the attention of the local authority's designated safeguarding lead officer. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 22.6)
- The registered person should ensure that the registered manager has an annual appraisal of her performance. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 24.6)

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: SC057262

Registered provider: Children of Colour Ltd

Registered provider address: Children of Colour Ltd, 102-116 Windmill Road,
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Inspector

Seka Graovac, Social Care Inspector

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