

Cuffe and Lacey Fostering

Cuffe And Lacey Associates Limited

Burnley Business Centre, 2 Empire Way, Liverpool Road, Burnley, Lancashire BB12 6HH

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Cuffe and Lacey Fostering is an independent fostering agency. It was registered with Ofsted in June 2020.

The agency offers a range of foster placements, including long-term, short-term, respite and emergency placements for children. Children who reach the age of 18 years can continue living with their foster carers as young adults. At the time of this inspection, the agency was providing foster care for 22 children in 17 fostering households.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2020.

This inspection involved both on-site and off-site inspection activity. Inspection activity included speaking with managers, supervising social workers, foster carers, children and other professionals.

Inspection dates: 4 to 8 August 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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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: 12 December 2022

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 live in settled, loving and stable foster homes. Staff and foster carers consistently provide high-quality and individualised care to children. Foster carers form trusting relationships with children, which enhances children's progress and sense of security and belonging. Children are making significant and sustained progress in all areas of their lives. One older child said, 'My foster carer has changed me for the better.'

The agency is unquestionably focused on the needs of the children and the foster carers. Foster carers receive excellent and timely support, advice and guidance. Staff are held in high regard by foster carers who describe the support they receive as 'incredible' and the agency as being 'like a big family'. One foster carer said, 'I can't speak highly enough of them.'

The agency goes above and beyond to support children to maintain strong and positive relationships with people who are important to them. Foster carers and staff have established incredibly positive relationships with family members for the benefit of children. Where the plan is for children to go back home to live with family members, foster carers demonstrate extensive empathy and flexibility to ensure a smooth and positive move for children. One parent described the support from the agency and the foster carers as 'amazing' and another as 'so supportive'.

Foster carers benefit from a wide range of excellent training opportunities. Bespoke training is offered regularly, and the agency provides one-to-one tailored training when needed. The training is highly valued by the foster carers. One foster carer described it as 'enjoyable and really helpful'. The training provides foster carers with the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the children in their care exceptionally well.

Foster carers who are new to the role are made to feel incredibly welcome and prepared. They say they feel valued, respected and listened to. Assessments are carried out within timescales and with sensitivity and rigour. One foster carer, who joined the agency recently, described the agency's approach as 'amazing'.

Children's interests are nurtured, and they are encouraged to try new things. They are attending clubs and taking part in enriching activities, which enhance their health and emotional well-being. The agency hosts fun and sociable events for children and foster carers, such as a summer picnic and a Christmas party.

Staff and foster carers promote children's education effectively. If schools are not meeting children's needs, staff and foster carers work together to advocate on the children's behalf to ensure that they achieve the best education outcomes.

The agency has developed positive and highly effective working relationships with other professionals for the benefit of children. When decisions are made that may not be in a child's best interests, these are respectfully but confidently challenged and escalated when necessary. One social worker said that the care provided to the children by the foster carers is 'fantastic', and this is due to the incredible support from the agency.

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

There is a strong safeguarding culture in the agency, and this is reflected in the care provided to children by their foster carers. There have been relatively few safeguarding incidents since the last inspection. Children do not go missing from their foster home and have not needed to be held to keep them safe. Foster carers and staff work collaboratively with other agencies to keep children safe.

Foster carers have regular contact with their supervising social worker. Foster carers are provided with the opportunity to reflect on the care they provide to children and ways to manage any current and emerging risks. Supervising social workers appropriately challenge when needed in a sensitive and supportive manner. They know the foster carers and the children exceptionally well. This helps to ensure that children are kept safe and the level of care provided is consistently high.

Children have extremely clear and individualised safe care plans in place, which are updated regularly. They outline identified risks and what action foster carers can take to help them keep children safe. All staff from the agency meet regularly to discuss any safeguarding concerns to ensure that children are kept safe, and practice is consistent.

Children say they feel safe living with their foster carers. Their social workers are overwhelmingly positive about the care that children receive and recognise the significant progress that they make.

Allegations against foster carers are dealt with swiftly and appropriately. There is effective and proactive working with the local authority designated officer.

Foster carers continue to receive an excellent level of support from the agency outside of office hours. Foster carers say the availability of knowledgeable, supportive and proactive staff at all times of crisis or uncertainty helps them to respond effectively to the immediate needs of children in their care.

Staff are trained in a therapeutic model, which is embedded in their practice. This knowledge is shared with foster carers and other stakeholders to develop practice. Staff and foster carers use their therapeutic skills and knowledge to help children understand past experiences in a safe and secure way. This enhances children's emotional well-being and capacity to regulate and manage their behaviours safely.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is inspirational, child centred and committed to her role. She is supported by experienced senior managers who share her motivation and drive to improve outcomes for children placed with the agency's approved foster carers. The manager instils a culture of high expectation and continual improvement and development. She is held in high regard by children, foster carers and other professionals. Foster carers described her as approachable, organised and highly responsive.

The manager has effective oversight of the service, fostering business and children's outcomes. Children's progress and achievements are regularly tracked and celebrated. The agency's electronic recording systems are generally well maintained. However, they do not always detail the complete journey for children and foster carers or key decisions made by the agency.

Staff benefit from regular supervision and team meetings that provide them with the opportunity to seek support and reflect on their practice.

The fostering panel and agency decision-maker make timely recommendations and decisions about people's suitability to foster. However, there is a lack of challenge and scrutiny at times, and not all panel members have had their performance appraised annually. This has not impacted on the safety of children or the quality of the care provided.

Foster carers benefit from regular support groups, which are well attended. Foster carers feel valued and listened to. The agency set up an additional online support group in the evening, following feedback from a foster carer who was unable to attend the in-person group during the day. Foster carers described the support groups as enjoyable and helpful.

The agency has excellent working relationships with the placing authorities who commission its services. Feedback received from commissioners and children's social workers was overwhelmingly positive. One commissioner said that they have 'nothing but praise' for the agency.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that each panel member's performance is reviewed annually against agreed performance objectives. (The Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations Volume 4, section 5.15, page 41)
- The registered person should ensure that panels play an important quality assurance role, providing objectivity and having the ability to challenge practice that is felt to fall short of 'The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards' or not to be in the interests of children. (The Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations Volume 4, section 5.2, page 38)
- The registered person should ensure that information about the child and decisions made about them is recorded clearly in their files. (Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 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: 2592566

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Inspector

Zillah Brooks, Social Care Inspector

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