

Credo Care

Credo Care Ltd
12 High Street, Lydd, Romney Marsh, Kent TN29 9AJ
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency was founded in 2004 and is based in Lydd, Kent within the Southeast Region. There are sub-offices located in the Midlands and East Anglia. The agency specialises in caring for disabled children and those who have complex medical needs, learning difficulties and/or autism. The agency offers short-term, long-term, staying put and specialised respite care placements.

At the time of this inspection, there were 76 children placed and 86 fostering households, some of which offer respite care only.

Inspection dates: 29 April to 3 May 2019

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	requires improvement to be good

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 14 August 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are enabled to build trusting relationships with carers who know them well and understand their needs. They live in stable homes and, as a result, children feel safe, loved and cared for, and are valued members of the fostering family.

Children are treated with dignity and respect. They are children first. They experience care which is responsive to their individual identity, helps them to form a positive view of themselves, and enhances their ability to form attachments and build resilience.

Children are making progress in their education. Communications between carers, staff and schools are tailored to ensure consistency. Staff and carers are ambitious for children and have high aspirations for them. Children are very aware of this and this increases their self-esteem.

Good working relationships with health professionals ensure that children's highly complex health needs are met safely and consistently. A multi-disciplinary approach supported and encouraged by the agency ensures that children receive specialist support and that carers can access the specific training and advice required.

Children are making excellent progress in their placements. They are given a wide range of positive experiences, including memorable firsts which have enriched their lives.

Children who do not communicate verbally are actively supported to express their views and wishes. The agency goes to great lengths to ensure that the children's voices remain at the centre of all aspects of planning and service development.

The agency supports children to have visits with their birth family members. Carers are supported to include important people in children's lives in decision-making, activities, and to be proud of the progress that their children make. Carers support children well in coping with birth family visiting arrangements which they may find distressing. Carers advocate on the children's behalf and ensure that children's needs remain central to these arrangements.

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

Children express the view that they feel safe and have a trusted adult whom they can confide in. Children have good relationships with their carers and can talk to them about worries, concerns and personal matters. Carers provide children with practical advice and information about the risks that they face but are not overly risk averse. This ensures that children are able to participate safely in opportunities which enrich their lives. One child said, 'My mum (carer) explains to me why she worries about me and what could happen to me, but lets me do things and be with my friends as well. She always makes sure I am safe.'

A thorough safeguarding policy provides guidance to staff and carers about how to respond to any concerns that they may have about the welfare of a child. Managers

ensure that this is implemented appropriately. Managers and staff work closely with other professionals and family members as appropriate, to ensure that there is an agreed robust response to any identified areas of risk.

Staff receive meaningful supervision that provides time to reflect on their practice and development. Staff feel valued and hold the agency in high regard. Training is sufficient and proactive. Staff are provided opportunities to develop their practice through the identification of and response to individualised training needs.

Staff undertake basic agency risk assessments, placement plans and safer care plans to support carers in meeting the needs of children in their care. However, these do not always sufficiently detail all relevant practical information, strategies and information to enable carers to respond to children's needs and to manage risk effectively.

Matching decisions do not always evidence that all risks have been explored or that consideration has been given to how these risks will be managed or minimised. Matching processes are variable in quality and do not consistently explore all the needs, risks and identified gaps, nor how these should be addressed. Staff do not sufficiently identify gaps in carers' specific knowledge, training and support needs. Matching processes have not always ensured that children are placed with carers who possess the physical resources to meet children's needs, and risk assessments do not sufficiently outline the strategies required to keep children safe in these situations.

Recruitment practices have not always ensured that those who work with children are fit to do so. Managers have identified shortfalls and taken the necessary steps to address these. Some carers have not been fully supported to understand the implications of poor recruitment practices in relation to the employment of support workers, and this has resulted in some carers feeling dissatisfied. While this is an area of weakness within the agency, this has not directly impacted on the safety of children.

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

The previous registered manager left the agency in November 2018. A new manager joined in January 2019 and has submitted his registered manager application to Ofsted.

There has been an expansion in the numbers of carers and children since the last inspection in August 2017. The agency is now providing services from three identified office bases. A number of carers who had previously fostered with another agency have been approved by this agency. The transition of these carers has been problematic, resulting in some carers feeling unheard and unsupported. The lack of clarity in relation to the use of support staff and respite care had resulted in some carers feeling unnecessarily stressed and undervalued.

The departure of key senior managers has resulted in inconsistencies in the oversight of aspects of the service. Poor interim management arrangements resulted in supervision of social work staff by a manager who was inappropriately positioned

to carry out this role. Senior managers failed to identify or act on this conflict of interest.

The assessment of prospective carers is of variable quality. Carers are prepared well for their role and they access necessary training through the assessment process, although some reports seen by inspectors were variable in terms of the quality of information included. The fostering panel had identified these weaknesses and appropriate steps have been taken to address the shortfalls. Leaders and managers have planned training to address and improve the quality assurance processes.

Panel members have not all engaged in an annual appraisal process. Consequently, some panel members have participated in approval recommendations without the sufficient scrutiny of their continued ability to perform at the required level.

Supervising social workers have manageable caseloads. This enables them to provide regular and good-quality support to carers.

The agency is operating within the ethos outlined in the statement of purpose. The document remains current and, combined with the agency website, provides useful information for those seeking to use the service.

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—</p> <p>(a) the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Fostering Regulations 2011, Regulation 11(a))</p>	01/07/2019
<p>The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. (Fostering Regulations 2011, Regulation 17)</p>	01/07/2019
<p>(1) The fostering service provider must not—</p> <p>(a) employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so, or</p> <p>(b) allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so.</p> <p>(2) This paragraph applies to any person who is employed, other than by the fostering service provider, in a position in which that person may in the course of their duties have regular contact with children placed by the fostering service.</p> <p>(3) For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person—</p> <p>(a) is of integrity and good character,</p> <p>(b) has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work they are to perform,</p> <p>(c) is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform,</p> <p>and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1.</p>	01/07/2019

<p>(4) The fostering service provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that any person working for a fostering service who is not employed by the fostering service, and to whom paragraph (2) does not apply, is appropriately supervised while carrying out their duties. (Fostering Regulations 2011, Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b)(2)(3)(a)(b)(c)(4))</p>	
<p>The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them—</p> <p>(a) receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal, and</p> <p>(b) are enabled from time to time to obtain further qualifications appropriate to the work they perform. (Fostering Regulations 2011, Regulation 21(4)(a)(b))</p>	01/07/2019
<p>(1) The registered person must maintain a system for—</p> <p>(a) monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and</p> <p>(b) improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.</p> <p>(3) 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). (Fostering Regulations 2011, Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b)(3))</p>	01/07/2019

Recommendations

- The foster home can comfortably accommodate all who live there including where appropriate any suitable aids and adaptations provided and fitted by suitably trained staff when caring for a disabled child. (NMS 10.1)
- Children are carefully matched to a foster placement. Foster carers have full information about the child (as set out in standard 3.9). (NMS 11.2)
- Ensure foster carers' personal development plans set out how they will be supported to undertake ongoing training and development that is appropriate to their development needs and experience. (NMS 20.5)
- Ensure that in reaching a decision or making a qualifying determination, the decision maker should consider *Hofstetter v LB Barnet* and *IRM [2009]* (Volume 4 Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Section 5.40)

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: SC035250

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Registered provider address: Credo Care, 12 High Street, Lydd, Romney Marsh
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Inspectors

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