

# Family First Fostering Agency

Family First Fostering Limited

413 High Street, Stratford, London, E15 4QZ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Family First fostering agency is an independent fostering agency based in East London. The agency offers a wide range of placements, including short- and long-term placements, planned, emergency and respite care in London and the Midlands area. At the time of the inspection, the agency had 116 fostering households caring for 185 children. There were 18 young people in staying put arrangements.

The fostering agency registered in November 2012. The manager registered in February 2025.

### Inspection dates: 10 to 14 February 2025

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>good</b>
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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	good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 21 March 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## **Inspection judgements**

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

Children develop trusting and nurturing relationships with their foster carers. Foster carers are committed to ensuring that children are kept safe and achieve their full potential. Children experience stability with their foster carers. Creative packages of care are available to foster carers to support children's individual needs and help them settle. One child said, 'I get along with them, they treat me like my own family.' Consequently, children make good progress from their starting points in their social, emotional, and physical development.

Foster carers and fostering staff promote children's education. Foster carers and fostering staff collaborate with social workers and the virtual school to ensure children educational needs are met. When children are not in education, alternative educational provision is identified by the fostering agency/

Foster carers ensure that children's basic health needs are met. Foster carers are helped by the fostering agency to develop specialist skills and knowledge in caring for children with specific health conditions. Foster carers work well with a wide range of medical and health professionals. Consequently, children's health needs do not act as a barrier to them being able to participate in most day-to-day activities.

Children are supported by their foster carers to participate in range of social and leisure activities, such as school trips, holidays, scouts, trips for shopping and to the cinema. Children's achievements are celebrated by foster carers and the fostering agency. Children develop confidence in their abilities and areas of interest, which in turn helps children to build resilience.

Foster carers are sensitive to children's identity, family history, language, and culture. Foster carers research areas of children's identity that they have a lack of knowledge in and embrace differences in religion, food, and customs. The fostering agency provides specialized training for foster carers supporting UASC and has recently created leaflets to raise awareness of the experiences of children from different countries. This helps children to feel comfortable in foster carers homes.

Foster carers and fostering staff work well with children's social workers to help children to keep in touch with birth family and those important to them

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

Children say they feel safe in foster care and have trusted adults that they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. When asked how their foster carers keep them safe, one child said that when there is a thunderstorm, their foster carer comforts them. Another child said that their foster carer, 'always give them a kiss on the cheeks every night and gives them hugs.'

The vulnerabilities for children are understood by foster carers and fostering staff.

There are good safety plans developed in consultation with foster carers, children's social workers and fostering staff. This means that appropriate strategies are in place to reduce the likelihood of harm to children.

Foster carers are supported to adjust their parenting to children who have had adverse early experiences. Foster carers reflect on the words they use and the actions they take when children are showing signs of distress through their behaviour. These responses mean that incidents do not escalate, and children learn appropriate and safe methods for managing their own emotions. Foster carers use stress balls, drama therapy and consultation with the fostering agency's psychotherapist to help children with their behaviour.

The incidences of children going missing, and incidents involving children's safety are low. Foster carers and fostering staff understand their responsibilities in reporting when children go missing.

Allegations or suspicions of harm by foster carers are dealt with promptly and effectively by fostering staff and managers. The local authority designated officer and local authority social workers are communicated with effectively when there are concerns regarding children's safety.

Foster carers receive appropriate training in safeguarding and safer caring from the point of assessment, through to post approval. Foster carers can access specific training in respect of certain risks, such as self-harm or radicalisation, gangs. Foster carers also receive appropriate training in de-escalation techniques.

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

A permanent, suitably qualified, and registered manager manages the fostering agency effectively. Leaders and managers promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for all children, foster carers, and staff.

Leaders and managers have been successful in recruiting staff with the relevant skills and knowledge to support foster carers and meet the needs of children. This alongside a successful (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) AYSE programme, and the provision of opportunities for internal promotion and progression, means that staff are well prepared to deliver quality services to foster carers and children.

Leaders and managers have good working relationships with local authorities and professionals and are clear regarding the plans for children. There is effective communication and appropriate challenge where necessary to secure positive outcomes for children. One local authority said, 'The communication is open and effective, and they are always keen to have discussions with my team and with social care to inform their matching.'

Fostering staff receive regular and effective supervision which allows them to reflect and focus on children's experiences and outcomes. Reflective practice groups enable

group learning and enhance critical thinking. Staff value the quality of supervision offered and opportunity to consider the impact of their work with children. Fostering staff also receive annual appraisals where feedback is obtained from children and foster carers as part of this process. This ensures that leaders and managers can monitor the effectiveness of the service and provide support to staff and carers.

Leaders and managers provide staff with good induction, training and learning opportunities. These are focussed on ensuring a skilled, confident, and competent staff team are equipped to meet the needs of children and foster carers. Examples of this are staff completing a Level 7 in leadership and management, (Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy) DDP training, and trauma informed training.

Foster carers receive regular and effective supervision that helps them in the task of understanding children's needs and responding to them. The foster carer review process is effective and ensures that foster carers continue to be suitable to care for vulnerable children. Leaders and managers provide foster carers with a wide range of training and development opportunities. Foster carers praise the quality of the training offered and support offered by fostering staff.

The fostering panel offers an effective quality assurance process in respect of the approval and re-approval of foster career. This process is made more effective due to the range of knowledge and experience on the panel and the oversight of an experienced chair and ADM. However, fostering staff and panel members have not had an opportunity to attend a joint annual training day for some time.

Leaders and managers have a strong commitment to improving the quality of care provided to children and support to foster carers. Consultation with foster carers, fostering staff and children, and patterns and trends, are reviewed to influence practice and develop initiatives. Leaders and managers know the strengths and areas for improvement and take action to improve the service. One example of this is the introduction of a safeguarding board to provide an effective oversight of safeguarding matters.

## **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.

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that each person on the central list is given the opportunity of attending an annual joint training day with the fostering service's fostering staff. ('Fostering services: National minimum standards', 23.10)

### **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:** SC453181

**Registered provider:** Family First Fostering Limited

**Registered provider address:** Family First Fostering Ltd, Unit 4, 17 Plumbers Row, London, E1 1EQ

**Responsible individual:** Geeta Hasmat-Ali

**Registered manager:** Victor Morata Roca

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## **Inspector**

Colin Bent, social care inspector

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