Slough Children First fostering agency rated good by Ofsted inspectors

Tuesday 31 August, 2021

Slough Children First's Independent Fostering Agency has been rated good by inspectors from Ofsted following an inspection of the service in July. In a letter published on Ofsted's website, staff at the agency and foster carers were praised for their success in improving the service, moving it from simply compliance to quality.

The inspectors noted that "leaders were aspirational and visible, and they had driven the provision forward." Particular tribute was paid to Saima Arif, the registered manager within the fostering service who took over following the previous inspection. The inspectors noted that her "expectations of high-quality and child-focused practice are clear" but also that staff were given the support they needed to achieve this and the opportunity to learn new skills and develop their practice. The support and opportunity to develop was also provided to foster carers who received "bespoke training that ensures they have the skills and knowledge required."

Highlighting how everyone had worked together to ensure all children in the service are given the opportunities they need, it was found that "clear, child focused goals have been embraced by staff and foster carers." Children are settled, they have safe, consistent care and are able to build trusting, positive relationships.

When placing a child with foster carers, each child's needs are carefully considered so they can be matched to the foster carers skill set and this can help the child to thrive. As a result, children are doing well and, in some cases, are exceeding expectations. The inspectors cited one example of a child who was non-verbal when they arrived at their new foster carers but visits to a speech and language therapists combined with plenty of extra encouragement had enabled the child to express themselves and grow in confidence.

Foster carers were also given praise by the inspectors who noted how they "go the extra mile to support the children's changing needs" and that "they instil children with skills for life through positive experiences and routines that equip children for their future independence."

Despite the challenges brought about by Covid, "creative efforts were made to continue participation" which children and foster carers spoke positively about. Staff had maintained a sense of community by making use of digital technology, while also recognising the importance of face-to-face meetings. "As a result, children and foster carers have felt well supported."

Safeguarding had been an area of concern during the previous inspection but this time the inspectors found that any concerns were reported promptly and the fostering service worked well with partners agencies and foster carers to resolve any concerns that did arise.

"We are absolutely delighted with this outcome," said Saima Arif, Registered Manager at the IFA. "We knew we had made significant improvements and were desperate for this inspection to take place so we could prove that."

"Moving from inadequate to good within two years has involved a lot of hard work so we are incredibly proud of this achievement as it evidences Slough as a good place to work and to foster.

"Slough Children's Services are on an improvement journey," said Cllr Christine Hulme, lead member for children's services, lifelong learning and skills at Slough Borough Council. "I would like to place on record my thanks and appreciation for the hard work and dedication of all the staff in our fostering service, our valued foster carers, and our children in care for giving their feedback, which in turns helps us improve standards and achieve positive outcomes for them. This latest Ofsted rating is a testament to that hard work and dedication."

Could you help a child or young person reach their full potential? More than ever there is a need foster carers in Slough to help look after children either in the short or long-term. If you have space in your heart and room in your home then you have it in you to change a life. Find out more about fostering through Slough Children First by visiting fosterforslough.com, phoning 01753 690777, or emailing foster@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk

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