

# Caritas Care

Caritas Care Limited

218 Tulketh Road, Ashton-on-Ribble, Preston PR2 1ES

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This fostering agency is run by a charity. The agency provides long-term, short-term, parent-and-child and respite foster placements.

At the time of this inspection, the agency was providing foster care for 19 children in 17 fostering households.

The registered manager post has been vacant since July 2025. A new manager has been appointed. She has applied for registration with Ofsted.

### Inspection dates: 20 to 24 October 2025

**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 **good**

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

**Date of last inspection:** 26 September 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**

Many children live with their fostering families for years and benefit from stable and loving homes. A number of children remain with their foster carers into adulthood through staying put arrangements, which is testament to the strength of their relationships.

Children's moves into fostering households are managed well, with the agency placing strong emphasis on matching. The matching process includes a review of relevant information, including known risks, family dynamics and the child's needs. This enables carers to prepare effectively and respond to any emerging challenges. When children's needs escalate, the agency provides additional support and oversight to support children and foster carers.

The manager and supervising social workers have a thorough understanding of each foster carer's individual skills. Foster carers are involved in decisions about children moving into their homes. Therefore, children only move in with the agency's foster carers when it is identified that their needs can be met effectively.

One child's social worker said, 'Genuinely, I wish we could clone these foster carers around the country. They talk to the child about their birth family, support them to express their wants and thoughts. The whole household feels very loving, safe and sympathetic to their needs.'

In the very small number of cases where children do leave their foster families in an unplanned manner, the registered manager and the team discuss the learning from these events. This learning is then used to inform future decision-making and ensure that foster carers and children receive the right support at the right time.

Children live with foster carers who have the skills and experience to meet their individual needs. Where appropriate, foster carers are supported by the in-house therapeutic practitioners. These practitioners work alongside schools to support children in education. The therapy team also works directly with children where life-story work is needed to help children understand their early life experiences. This reflects a child-centred approach to sustaining children in their fostering families and supporting long-term outcomes.

Children's education is well supported. Foster carers and supervising social workers emphasise the importance of education and participate in school meetings. When children need additional support, this is swiftly identified. Supervising social workers and foster carers are strong advocates for children, which ensures that they receive the additional support they need.

Foster carers actively support children to engage in a wide range of social and recreational activities with their families and friends. These experiences promote

children's social development, build confidence and contribute to their overall well-being, and ensure that children have fun and form positive relationships.

The agency holds regular events that provide valuable opportunities for children to socialise and build relationships with their peers. These events also include foster carers' birth children, allowing the whole family to benefit from shared social and recreational activities. The agency uses these gatherings to seek children's views about the care they receive, ensuring that their voices inform service development and quality assurance.

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

Children are kept safe and say they feel safe in their foster homes. Assessments and safer care plans are comprehensive and support foster carers to understand and respond to children's needs. However, children do not receive an age-appropriate safer care plan to help them to understand the expectations of their fostering household. Although this has not impacted on safeguarding practice, this is a missed opportunity to inform children and include them in decision-making about their own care.

Children's care records completed by foster carers and supervising social workers are comprehensive and provide a good understanding of the child's progress, experiences and day-to-day care. However, children's records are written about them rather than to them. This practice does not help children to see these records as their own should they want to read and contribute to them now or access them when they reach adulthood.

Incidents of children going missing from home are extremely rare. For the one child who has been missing on occasions, these incidents were managed effectively with prompt action taken by the carers and supervising social workers in line with the agency's safeguarding procedures. Relevant professionals were informed and the child's risk assessments and plans were updated to reflect the risks and provide foster carers with clear actions to follow.

The agency has had one recent incident when a child had to leave foster carers in an unplanned manner, as the foster carers were unable to continue to meet the child's needs. The response to this was proportionate and completed in a timely manner with clear oversight and a focus on the child's well-being.

Each fostering household receives at least one unannounced visit annually. Supervising social workers carry out regular visits, which include supervision meetings with carers and time spent with children. These visits provide assurance that children are safe and that foster carers are meeting children's needs effectively.

Safeguarding practice is child-centred and consistently effective. Managers notify relevant professionals and the regulator promptly when serious incidents occur. Notifications are timely, containing all necessary and appropriate information. Follow-

up actions are implemented to reduce the risk of recurrence and to ensure children's safety.

Allegations against foster carers are managed promptly, in line with safeguarding procedures and statutory guidance. Investigations are timely, well-documented and prioritise the safety and welfare of children. Outcomes are clearly communicated, and learning is used to inform future practice.

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

Leadership and management of the agency is strong. There has been a planned transition from the previous registered manager to the new manager, who has been promoted internally into this post. These arrangements have provided continuity for the staff team, foster carers and children.

Although still new in post, the interim manager has begun to identify areas for growth and improvement and has begun to address these. These developments are still in their infancy and, therefore, the impact cannot yet be evidenced.

The interim manager is supported by a very experienced responsible individual and a skilled head of service. All members of the leadership and management team have been with the agency for a long time and bring a wealth of knowledge to their roles.

Leaders use a range of well-established quality assurance and performance management tools to support their understanding of the service. Regular meetings take place to discuss and evaluate the service. There are clear plans in place to develop the service further. There is renewed focus on the recruitment strategy to address the national and local challenges in the recruitment of new foster carers.

Foster carers are supported by a stable and skilled team of supervising social workers. Supervising social workers have capacity within their workload to provide foster carers with a good level of support and oversight and to get to know children well.

Monthly supervision and annual appraisals are used effectively as opportunities for reflection on practice. Appraisals utilise feedback from colleagues to inform discussions. They do not yet seek the views of children. This is a missed opportunity to use the voice of children to develop staff practice.

Most foster carers have been with the agency for a number of years. Foster carers who provided their views during the inspection were, without exception, extremely complimentary about their experiences. Foster carers welcome fostering for a charity and the values associated with this. They receive regular training and opportunities for less formal support through face-to-face and online groups.

Since the last inspection, the role of the fostering independent reviewing officer has moved from in-house to an externally commissioned arrangement. This strengthens

the challenge and independent oversight of foster carers and the agency more broadly.

Due to low numbers of new foster carer approvals since the last inspection, the fostering panel has had a focus on annual reviews of foster carers. The chair of the panel is very experienced and skilled in her role. Quality assurance of work from the panel adviser ensures that matters are only presented to panel when they include all the information required to inform their decision-making.

The agency has good working relationships with the local authorities who commission their services. Feedback received from commissioners and children's social workers during the inspection was overwhelmingly positive. One local authority commissioner said, 'Once children move to the agency, they stay. Lots of children have been with their foster carers for over 10 years. These children have an excellent experience of consistent and caring family life.'

## **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, The 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 child has their own age-appropriate version of their safer care plan. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 4.1)
- The registered person should ensure that information about the child is recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.6)
- The registered person should ensure that staff appraisals take into account any views of children the service is caring for. ('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:** SC037797

**Registered provider:** Caritas Care Limited

**Registered provider address:** 218 Tulketh Road, Ashton-on-Ribble, Preston PR2 1ES

**Responsible individual:** Susan Swarbrick

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

**Telephone number:** 01772 732313

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## Inspectors

Dawn Parton, Social Care Inspector

Colin Jones, Social Care Inspector

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