

tiney Childminder Agency

Inspection dates:	28 February to 2 March 2022
Overall inspection judgement	Effective
Leadership and management	Effective
The quality of the agency's services	Effective
The impact of the agency's services on the quality of the education and care provided by its childminders	Effective
Previous overall inspection judgement	N/A

Summary findings

tiney Childminder Agency has been registered since June 2019. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/Nominated Individual, and all the staff share the agency mission and deep desire to build an organisation which advances the early years sector, keeps children safe, ensures children are school ready and reassures parents by providing a professional childminding service. The agency started operating in the London area, and after a short while extended into the home counties. Recently, tiney has also launched in the Greater Manchester area. The agency's vision is to become a national childminder agency offering high-quality experiences for all service users.

tiney has mainly been operating during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has brought some challenges. Despite this, tiney has over 260 registered childminders and a substantial number of applications in progress. A knowledgeable and passionate staff team has supported the growth of the agency. Many childminders say that they have been inspired by some staff because of these attributes.

A dedicated, flexible and user-friendly 'app' and online community hub, which supports childminder applicants, registered childminders and parents underpins the work of the agency. Childminders make good use of the training programmes and webinars that are available on the app to support their practice. They all complete mandatory, informative safeguarding training. They understand their responsibilities and are confident about the procedures to follow if they were to have concerns about a child.

As required, the agency conducts quality assurance inspections on an annual basis. Written reports of their findings are shared with the childminder and available to parents upon request. Ofsted inspectors observed some of tiney's quality assurance inspections and found that the quality assurance inspectors awarded judgements appropriately aligned to the practice observed.

The agency has established good working partnerships with many local authorities. These partnerships help to support childminders to access local training and ensure that childcare funding is accessible. However, there are some local authorities where there has been some reluctance to develop these partnerships. In these instances, childminders experience more difficulty in accessing childcare funding and local training. tiney is continuing its efforts to resolve and overcome any blockers so that no childminder is disadvantaged. The agency has established systems to ensure that the supply of information to local authorities is undertaken as required. The system for supplying similar information to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is not yet effectively established and the agency is considering what action is needed.

Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and managers have good oversight of all safeguarding concerns. Robust and transparent systems are in place to assess concerns relating to potential risk of harm to children. The consistency of decision making is scrutinised at quality and safeguarding panel meetings. These meetings are attended by three members of staff; at least two of which are senior managers and decisions are noted so that there is a clear audit trail. Where necessary, the agency has used their enforcement power to deregister childminders or suspend registration. Suspension notices are issued in a timely manner but do not contain specific information about the duration of suspension and all relevant next steps and/or options such as a right to appeal to the first-tier tribunal.

Recommendations

- Tighten regulatory processes and procedures around suspension to ensure that all required information is clearly outlined in suspension notices.
- Ensure that systems for sharing the registration details and status of childminders with HMRC are improved.

- Continue to build links with local authorities to support childminders nationally; this will help to ensure that all childminders have access to any relevant funding and support them to fill their childcare places.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the childminder agency

- Leaders and managers are very ambitious. The whole staff team has a strong passion and commitment to working collaboratively to promote good and continuously improving outcomes for all children. The agency's mission is to ensure that childminders are well supported to deliver good-quality care and learning for all children, so that no child is disadvantaged.
- The CEO and senior staff at tiney liaise with other Childminder Agencies (CMAs), Ofsted and the Department for Education to raise the profile of CMAs. They all seek innovative ways of working and continually improving efficiency.
- The agency's self-evaluation is broad, thorough, and accurate. It provides a clear outline of what is working, what needs revising and what they need to do next. To help achieve their goals and ambitions, the agency is partnering and collaborating with external early years experts to improve experiences for childminders.
- The CEO aspires for tiney to be a national childminder agency serving childminders, and families across the country. This aspiration is seeing fruition through the recent expansion of tiney into the Greater Manchester area. The expansion is possible due to strong leadership and cohesive working between the staff team and the Greater Manchester local authority early years team.
- Leaders encourage all staff to contribute to the self-evaluation process. Staff are empowered to make decisions where appropriate, and they are included in the growth and development of the agency. For example, staff recognised that the training programme which supports the early years foundation stage (EYFS) requirements for learning and development (L&D) is not as strong as the safeguarding training programme. As a result, a new lead adviser for education has been appointed and the L&D training programme is being expanded and rolled out.
- The CEO leads a company where equality, diversity, and inclusion is a priority for all. The views of childminders and staff have been gathered and workshops and resources provided to help grow awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion matters such as unconscious bias, privilege, and micro-aggressions. Comments from childminders who completed the pre-inspection survey and many of those spoken with during the inspection say that tiney is an organisation where everyone is valued.
- All childminders complete mandatory safeguarding training. As a result, they know what to do if they have concerns about the safety and welfare of a child. A small number of childminders report that they do not know who the designated safeguarding lead is, nonetheless, this does not detract from them being confident about how to report concerns.

- The agency follows a rigorous recruitment procedure for all staff and consultants. The CEO's strong commitment to advancing a professional early years sector starts with an experienced and knowledgeable staff team that shares the same drive. Effective arrangements are in place for monitoring staff practice and providing good opportunities for career progression. Consequently, staff say they feel valued and are inspired by shared and common goals.
- The childminder registration process is thorough. Applicants attend informative pre-registration meetings and have access to training which provides them with the knowledge and initial skills needed. All childminders who responded to the agency pre-inspection survey and who were interviewed during the inspection say that they were very well supported through the registration process.
- The partnerships and collaboration with local authorities is varied. Some childminders report that they have found accessing childcare funding complex where the partnerships are not well established. However, there are some well-established partnerships with local authorities, and these offer good support to childminders and families. They continue to work to strengthen and develop partnerships with all local authorities.

The quality of the agency's services

- The agency's app is a key feature of the effective communication between the staff team, their childminder community and parents and carers. It offers instant access to information, training, and support. The app has the flexibility and capacity to grow as they expand, and during the pandemic has ensured that they maintained a good presence with their childminders and families.
- The agency's quality assurance process effectively monitors and evaluates the quality and development of childminders' practice. The data on the app shows the range of training that childminders have completed. This data contributes to the planning of quality assurance and compliance visits and helps to identify areas of focus for future training. Quality assurance inspectors use the information on the app, such as learning profiles, to help them accurately assess the progress children are making and identify where childminders may require additional guidance.
- Through their 'community hub', they have created a successful system for childminders to network and provide peer-to-peer support. The hub offers an online chat forum for sharing information and for childminders to access training webinars. Online security levels are in place to reduce risk and ensure that information is only accessible to those with the appropriate access rights.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that planned face-to-face training opportunities could not proceed. Despite the good range of continuous professional development programmes available on the app, many childminders say they have missed face-to-face training. However, an onsite conference day was organised once public health guidance allowed and the response from childminders who attended has been extremely positive. Many say they found the

session on inclusion beneficial, and they valued the focus on the business aspect of managing their childminding.

- The training programme available to support knowledge and understanding of the Statutory framework for the EYFS safeguarding and welfare requirements receives high acclaim from childminders. The evidence gathered during inspection clearly showed that the training has a good impact on childminders who demonstrate high levels of awareness and understanding in relation to safeguarding procedures.
- Specific training for childminder assistants is in the early stages of development; this will help to ensure that all assistants are clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- Childminders' implementation of the learning and development requirements is good and/or improving. However, the agency has identified a gap in the provision of training and support to further strengthen childminders' knowledge and understanding in this area of the EYFS. Strategies are in place to address this, including the appointment of a new lead role for education and expanding the training programme.
- Parents are mostly positive about the services provided by tiney. For example, they say that any complaints are well managed. Parents feel the agency offers a personal approach and staff are friendly and professional. Some are very complimentary about the home-learning support which is available to them on the app. However, a few parents are critical about the delays in addressing invoicing issues.
- The dedicated special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) role contributes positively to tiney's commitment to making a difference to the lives of all children cared for by tiney childminders. The SENCO works closely with childminders to provide them with targeted guidance and support. Childminders are highly complimentary about the difference the agency's support has made to the care and education of their minded children.

The impact of the agency's services on the quality of the education and care provided by its childminders

- Childminders describe the registration process as supportive and excellent. The pre-registration theory tests ensure that childminders understand their responsibilities, including their safeguarding duty. As a result, childminders follow the correct steps to make appropriate referrals to children's social care where they are concerned about the safety and welfare of a child.
- Childminders make excellent use of the app for managing their childcare practice. They use the online chat facility for raising queries and seeking support, saying that queries are usually responded to by knowledgeable advisers within 24 hours. However, some childminders would prefer an option to speak directly to an adviser in the first instance.
- Childminders know their children well and plan for their individual needs. Childminders who care for children who may be at risk of falling behind receive

individualised plans to help them deliver a targeted programme of care and learning. As a result, children are given good levels of support to help them prepare for their next stage of development.

- Childminders told inspectors about the well-established and highly valued agency book club. This is an excellent aide for supporting children’s communication and language development. In collaboration with their support partners, the agency provides the featured book, accompanying resources and online activities to support the childminder’s teaching.
- All childminders receive their required quality assurance inspection; this ensures that practice is assessed at least annually. In addition, where concerns about a childminder are brought to the attention of tiney, a compliance visit is completed. The visit allows the concerns to be assessed and enforcement action to be taken where necessary. This reduces the risk of poor practice where the failures are serious.
- tiney is keen to promote the professional role of childminders and to help them use their talents, skills, and expertise. Childminders have opportunities to become trained advisers or lead local community support circles. These support circles help ensure that childminders, wherever they are located, can partner with each other to build a strong local network. These support circles are facilitated by a ‘community coach/lead’ who is an experienced and knowledgeable childminder. tiney supports and liaises with the community coach/leads, which helps tiney to understand local issues and respond.
- The agency’s inspectors have always provided quality assurance visits, compliance visits and support visits. However recently, tiney has listened to comments from staff regarding the tension between the inspection role and the advisory role. As a result, tiney has reviewed its practice and decided to divide the responsibilities. tiney is introducing two separate roles: a quality assurance/compliance inspector, and a separate support/advisory officer. This will help ensure that the roles are more specifically focused and targeted.

Childminder Agency details

Unique reference number	CA000038
Local authority	Newham
Type of provision	Childminder Agency
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Number of active childminders	260
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Previous overall inspection judgement	N/A

Information about this childminding agency

tiney Childminder Agency registered with Ofsted in 2019. It registers childminders on the Early Years and the Childcare Registers. All tiney childminders receive ongoing support and training. tiney also provide services for parents, such as identifying alternative childcare arrangements when needed, and providing an invoicing service. The agency's operational office is in Holborn, London. It currently has over 260 registered childminders across London, the home counties, and Greater Manchester. The agency employs and contracts a relevantly experienced staff team.

Information about the inspection

The inspection was conducted by a team of two Early Years Senior Officers and seven Early Years Regulatory Inspectors. To assess the effectiveness of the agency, the inspection team held in-depth discussions with the CEO, agency managers, quality assurance inspectors, advisers, and support staff. They also conducted observation visits with quality assurance inspectors, visited childminders, and spoke with a number of parents. Various documents were sampled; these included the statement of purpose, the agency's self-evaluation document, complaints records, inspection reports, compliance visit reports, registration records, regulatory correspondence, and the childminder pre-inspection survey. In addition, the inspection team had a detailed introduction to the tiney app.

This was the agency's first inspection and was carried out under the Childcare Act 2006, as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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