

North West Fostering

Action For Children Services Limited

Unit 15, 6th Floor St James House, Pendleton Way, Salford M6 5FW

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

North West Fostering is an independent fostering agency run by a well-established children's charity. The agency provides long-term and short-term therapeutic foster placements. The agency also provides a therapeutic support service to children not placed with the agency. This service was not included as part of the inspection.

At the time of the inspection, the agency had 3 approved fostering households with 2 children in placement.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in May 2020.

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 December 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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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: 13 June 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 benefit from child-centred and therapeutic foster care that is carefully tailored to their individual needs. Children stay with their carers for a long time and are well integrated into their foster families. Staff and foster carers are aspirational for children, and children make good progress from their individual starting points.

The agency is small and stable. This allows staff, foster carers and children to feel part of their fostering community. They interact regularly, support one another and know each other well. Foster carers are very positive about the support they receive from the agency and other foster carers.

The agency actively promotes the participation of children and carers. Managers and staff regularly seek their views on a wide range of operational matters and consult them before making any significant changes. Children and their foster carers feel listened to, and their views are used to shape and improve the service.

The agency's therapeutic model is firmly embedded throughout the service. The clinical psychology service provides support to carers, children and their professional networks, enabling all to understand children's behaviour and how to manage it effectively. As a result, foster carers are resilient and children benefit from consistent, therapeutic care that meets their needs.

The agency has assessed one prospective foster carer in the inspection period. This assessment was timely and comprehensive. The assessing social worker identified all areas of vulnerability; however, 2 key areas were not fully analysed or evaluated. The agency's internal quality assurance processes did not identify these shortfalls. The panel identified the shortfalls in relation to one area of vulnerability, but not the other.

One child was matched to their fostering household during the inspection period. While the move was planned carefully, with input from all relevant stakeholders and at the child's pace, the matching process did not fully consider key vulnerabilities within the fostering household. As a result, the placement did not continue. Structured therapeutic support and enhanced visiting were implemented from the outset to support the placement.

Children are supported to develop skills for adulthood in a timely and meaningful way. Foster carers understand the individual needs of the children they care for, and the agency supports them to advocate for settings and plans that will meet children's needs when they move on from their foster homes. Children are involved in their plans and decision-making.

Children's health needs are well known and understood by their foster carers and the agency. Children have timely access to local health services and their routine

appointments. Children are encouraged to manage their own medication when this is safe and in line with their plans.

Children's identities are promoted well. When required, the agency provides timely therapeutic life-story work. The work is sensitive and delivered at the child's pace by a worker they have an existing positive relationship with. Foster carers are supported to facilitate family time in line with children's plans, helping them maintain important relationships. Children are active members of their communities. They take part in activities they enjoy and volunteer in their schools and local groups. Children are helped to make sense of their histories, maintain their relationships and develop their identities.

Children attend school or college. Foster carers are ambitious for children and support children to attend and achieve. Foster carers and the agency liaise effectively with education professionals when there are challenges in their learning journey; children are supported appropriately in a multi-agency way. Children have high attendance and high attainment and win awards for their contributions.

The agency encourages foster carers and professionals to recognise the achievements of the children, however big or small. They gather and share these regularly. The agency is proud of them, and children receive recognition for their achievements.

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

Children feel safe living with their foster carers. They have strong relationships with their carers and with staff at the agency. Children feel confident to approach them with any concerns. Placing authorities are positive about the care children receive and the support offered by the agency.

Foster carers' homes are secure and protect children from harm. Staff regularly check that fostering households remain suitable. The agency ensures that children are cared for in safe and comfortable environments. Risks to the children are identified and understood. Risk assessments are usually implemented promptly when new risks emerge. However, not all risk assessments include clear strategies for foster carers to follow, and one child did not have a missing-from-home plan in place after a missing episode. Children rarely go missing. Positively, on the one occasion a child did go missing, the carer took appropriate action to safeguard the child.

Foster carers know how to respond to children's needs. The agency supports carers to understand children's behaviour via the therapeutic service and the supervising social worker. Carers have clear and consistent boundaries and help children to manage their emotions and behaviour. Children are supported to take risks appropriate to their age and level of understanding.

Foster carers are appropriately trained to hold children. On the occasions carers have held children, this has been necessary to ensure the safety of the child. On one occasion, the least restrictive method was not used. The manager recognised this

and addressed it with the carer. After every incident, the manager informs the placing authority and therapeutic service, and the child is offered the chance to speak to their social worker.

The manager ensures that all allegations are handled fairly, quickly and in line with statutory guidance. Children are supported, and the agency makes appropriate decisions about the immediate safety of children alongside their placing authorities. Carer reviews take place as soon as possible after an allegation and are sent to the panel for scrutiny.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager and responsible individual have extensive fostering experience and have been in post for a significant period. Leaders are ambitious about the quality of care and demonstrate inspirational commitment to supporting carers. The manager works collaboratively with the team and promotes a culture of shared goals, accountability and high standards.

The manager makes a conscious effort to ensure they are known to the foster carers and the children within the agency. They visit occasionally to maintain their relationships and directly monitor the quality of care. The manager leads by example.

The agency has retained all staff for a long period. This means that staff are skilled and experienced in their roles. They know the foster carers and children well. Carers feel the team is helpful, responsive and organised.

The manager has detailed knowledge of what is happening with the agency and fostering households. However, some incidents do not have a clear written management review. The manager's oversight also did not recognise when one child required a specific missing-from-home risk assessment.

Carers keep detailed records of children's lived experiences. These records are timely and reviewed by staff. However, this oversight has not always recognised when language used is not child friendly.

The agency has sustained a small number of approved foster carers over the inspection period. This limits the number of children the agency can support and has meant that short-break arrangements have had to be made via placing authorities. Despite this, the wider organisation remains committed to the ongoing development of the agency. There is a clear development plan and recruitment strategy in place.

The agency shares a fostering panel with another agency from within the wider organisation. Panel members on the central list have a wide range of experience relevant to fostering and a gender balance. Minutes of panel meetings are detailed and reflect a clear rationale for recommendations and decision-making.

Panel members have timely appraisals and regular development days. They can access the agency's training offer and receive consultation and support from the therapeutic service. The agency supports the panel members to develop their skills and knowledge.

The relationships between the agency and external professionals are extremely positive. Other agencies consider the service to be of the highest quality and value the communication and focus on children's needs. The effectiveness of professional relationships ensures the children receive well-coordinated care and informed decision-making.

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.

Requirement	Due date
Where a person ("X") applies to become a foster parent and the fostering service provider decide to assess X's suitability to become a foster parent, any such assessment must be carried out in accordance with this regulation. Subject to paragraphs (2A) and (3), where the fostering service provider have obtained all the information set out in paragraph (1A) and have not given the notification in paragraph (1B) within 10 working days of doing so, the fostering service provider must subject to paragraph (3)— obtain the information specified in Part 2 of Schedule 3 relating to X and other members of X's household and any other information they consider relevant, prepare a written report on X which includes the following matters— the information required by Schedule 3 and any other information the fostering service provider consider relevant. (Regulation 26 (1) (2)(a)(c)(i)) In particular, that there are efficient and robust quality assurance processes in place to ensure that key information is fully considered in assessments of prospective foster carers.	16 March 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should aim to recruit sufficient foster carers to be responsive to current and predicted future demands on the service. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 13.1)

- The registered person should ensure that the fostering service only suggests foster carers to local authorities as a potential match for a child if the foster carer can reasonably be expected to meet the child's assessed needs and the impact of the placement on existing household members has been considered. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 15.1)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers know and implement what the fostering service and the responsible authority's policy is in relation to children going missing, and that children have individual missing plans where required. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 5.2)
- The registered person should regularly monitor all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify shortfalls, evaluate specific incidents and recognise patterns and trends. Immediate action should be taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.2)
- The registered person should ensure that entries in children's records are clearly expressed and non-stigmatising. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.5)

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: 1226858

Registered provider: Action For Children services LTD

Registered provider address: Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Colette Ferns

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Inspector

Sarah Huntbatch, Social Care Inspector

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