

County Fostering Service Limited

Unit 22, 4 Summerhouse Road, Moulton Park, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN3 6BJ

Registered provider: County Fostering Services Limited

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency registered with Ofsted in 2019. It is owned by a private company. The agency provides a wide range of placements, including emergency, short-term, long-term and parent and child placements.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had 10 fostering households and 22 children placed with foster carers.

There has been no registered manager since January 2024.

Inspection date: 21 October 2025

Date of previous inspection: 8 July 2024

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken in response to concerns notified to Ofsted regarding the leadership and management of the agency. These concerns included issues relating to safeguarding practice, the agency's staffing structure and compliance with safer recruitment processes. The purpose of the visit was to seek assurance that the agency has taken appropriate action to address the concerns raised.

There has not been a registered manager in post since January 2024. The responsible individual has made considerable effort to recruit a suitable person for this role. Leaders have reflected on the challenges experienced and used learning to improve their approach to recruitment practices.

Staffing within the agency has been inconsistent, which has resulted in foster carers experiencing changes in the supervising social workers allocated to support them.

The responsible individual has acknowledged these shortfalls. As an interim measure, an independent social worker who had previously worked for the agency and was familiar with the fostering families was recruited to provide continuity. Two new supervising social workers are now in post and are completing their handover with the independent social worker.

Staff are safely recruited. There is an effective system in place to ensure that staff are safe to work with children and families. Appropriate checks are undertaken robustly and exceed the minimum requirements.

Complaints and allegations have been appropriately investigated and reported to the local authority designated officer. However, there was a shortfall in notifying Ofsted about one of these allegations, and some notifications were submitted with delay. Leaders acknowledged these shortfalls and are making every effort to recruit an experienced manager to strengthen compliance and oversight.

As a small, family-run agency, leaders have demonstrated that their staffing structure provides independent scrutiny and effective oversight. The fostering panel operates robustly, and there is clear evidence that action is taken to address any shortfalls in foster carers' practice. The agency decision-maker is fulfilling the requirements of their role effectively, ensuring that safeguarding remains a priority in all decision-making processes.

Ofsted is satisfied with the findings from this monitoring visit. The requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection were not all reviewed during this monitoring visit and therefore remain in place. One new requirement has been made.

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The fostering panel must also give advice, and make recommendations, on such other matters or cases as the fostering service provider may refer to it. (Regulation 24 (4)(c))	31 January 2026
If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. Any notification made in accordance with this regulation which is given orally must be confirmed in writing. (Regulation 36 (1) (2)) The registered person must ensure that all allegations of harm towards children are reported to Ofsted.	31 January 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that managers, staff, volunteers and foster carers are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The level of delegation and responsibility of the manager, and the lines of accountability, should be clearly defined. This relates to the responsible individual and the manager being clear about roles and responsibilities in the service. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.4)
- The registered person should ensure that entries in records, decisions and reasons for them are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising, distinguish between fact, opinion and third-party information and are signed and dated. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.5)
- The registered person should ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. Children should be actively encouraged to read their files, other than necessarily confidential or third-party information, and to correct

errors and add personal statements. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.6)

- The registered person should ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. This includes the financial viability of the service, any serious incidents, allegations or complaints about the service and ensuring the quality of the service. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.1)
- The registered person should ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action should be taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.2)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the independent fostering agency since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: 2484185

Registered provider: County Fostering Services Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 22, 4 Summerhouse Road, Moulton Park,
Northampton, Northamptonshire NN3 6BJ

Responsible individual: Marie Archer

Registered Manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Emma Dacres, Social Care inspector

Kayleigh Spinks, Social Care inspector

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