

Star Fostering Ltd

Star Fostering Ltd

Unit 2b, East Bridgford Business Park, Kneeton Road, East Bridgford, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG13 8PJ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Star Fostering Ltd is an independent fostering agency based in East Bridgford, Nottinghamshire. The agency registered with Ofsted in 2019.

The agency offers a wide range of fostering placements, including emergency, respite, short-term, long-term, and parent and child placements. At the time of the inspection, there were 25 fostering households caring for 31 children.

The registered manager and the responsible individual registered with Ofsted in 2019.

Inspection dates: 11 to 15 November 2024

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: 11 December 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Compliance notices were issued in relation to Regulations 8 and 11. A monitoring visit was carried out on 30 January 2024. Ofsted was satisfied that the steps in the compliance notices were being addressed.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive individualised care from devoted foster carers. Children are embraced into everyday family life, enjoying regular holidays and family events with their foster carers. Staff and foster carers take pride in children's achievements and speak about them with great warmth. Foster carers enable children to be themselves and children flourish in their care.

The agency provides a model of care that replicates an extended family. They enjoy regular activities together, such as trampolining, picnics and festive celebrations. This helps children and foster carers to make and maintain close relationships with other fostering families. It also ensures that foster carers are well supported with care arrangements. Children spend time with a consistent named foster carer for sleepovers and holidays and look forward to these occasions. This helps to normalise children's experiences and increases their sense of belonging.

Most children enjoy long-term stability with their foster carers. Some children who have experienced several moves before being placed with the agency settle well with their foster carers and make good progress. The agency commissions a therapeutic parenting coach and trauma-informed consultant to support foster carers and staff. She provides trauma-informed training and one-to-one consultation. This helps to upskill foster carers and supervising social workers and strengthens placement stability.

Foster carers are skilled in supporting children's physical and emotional health needs. Foster carers are strong advocates for children and are proactive in seeking the necessary health assessments and treatment. As a result, children's overall health improves. For example, foster carers escalated health concerns for one child that were originally dismissed by health professionals, ensuring that the child received life-saving treatment. Another child no longer requires a nutritionist due to reaching a healthy weight and appetite. There are also several children being assessed for conditions such as foetal alcohol syndrome disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Children are supported by foster carers and the agency to do well in education. When children are unable to attend school, the agency is creative in supporting home learning. For example, the education support worker referred one child to a local project where they received one-to-one mentoring and engaged in a range of activities, such as building a bird shed, gardening, cooking and going to the gym. She also visited the child weekly and supported the child to settle in their new school.

The agency strives to keep siblings together where appropriate. This derives from a deep understanding of trauma and the lifelong impact on children being separated from their siblings. The manager is proactive and creative in supporting these larger families. For example, the manager has helped one family to increase their living

space to support a sibling group of five to remain living together with them long term. This helps children to maintain close sibling bonds and feelings of security.

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

The manager has made significant improvements since the last inspection, which has increased safety for children. Examples include the introduction of weekly safeguarding meetings where risks and vulnerabilities for each child in their care are discussed and action plans created where needed. Regular practice learning reviews have taken place in a range of areas, such as responding to concerns about children, unannounced visits, and supervision of foster carers. There has been an emphasis on growing professional curiosity and challenge of foster carers. All of this has strengthened the overall safeguarding culture in the agency.

The managers and staff know children well and have meaningful relationships with them. They are seen regularly by supervising social workers and their views are gathered in 'voice of the child' sessions. Children are also seen in response to an incident or when there are important topics to discuss. This provides children with an opportunity to share their worries or concerns regularly and at pertinent times.

Children's risks and vulnerabilities are well understood. Risk management plans and safer care plans are thorough and written in a sensitive way. Social work staff receive training in key areas, such as professional curiosity, professional challenge and critical analysis. This all helps to increase awareness of emerging risks to children.

Children do not go missing from home. One 16-year-old child spoke about how his foster carers keep him safe by having rules and boundaries which he is happy to adhere to as he respects his carers. He said they have taught him to be more understanding and manage his feelings better. He is now beginning to learn independence and take age-appropriate risks.

The agency has notified relevant agencies about some serious incidents involving children. Some of these were allegations against foster carers. None were substantiated from this inspection period and there is one that is still being investigated. These are managed appropriately and guidance from the local authority designated officer is followed.

There have been a small number of incidents of restraint, which have been reviewed by the manager. Where needed, support has been provided to foster carers to help them manage children's behaviour and improve their practice. Any concerns are addressed with foster carers and staff in a timely way. For example, a staff member was placed on a performance improvement plan when she did not reach the standards expected. Following restraints, children have made allegations of harm. These have not been treated as allegations or reported to the relevant authorities for oversight. This was raised with the manager during inspection and retrospective reports have been made. The manager has also made changes to restraint

processes to prevent further shortfalls. These changes will take time to be embedded into practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager and responsible individual have demonstrated dedication and due diligence in their approach to improving practice in the agency. They have achieved a considerable amount of change showing high levels of commitment to the children, foster carers and staff. They have retained foster carers, children and staff through a challenging period, which is testament to the relationships they have developed. Staff and carers have been fully invested in making the improvements and developing their practice.

The registered manager is genuinely invested in children's experiences and wants the best for them. She knows the children well and sees them regularly at the events organised by the agency and when they attend the Skills to Foster training. The manager ensures that children remain at the centre of practice. One panel member said, 'Child centredness permeates through everything they do.'

Staff benefit from regular supervision, which includes reflective discussions about children, safeguarding and their own development. Staff training relates to the needs of children. Social work staff receive the same training as foster carers, which means that there is consistency in the approaches in the care of children and supervision of foster carers. For example, a foster carer and the allocated supervising social worker are undertaking Makaton training as one child uses this form of communication.

The manager has systems in place to monitor children's care. The assistant manager carries out carer audits and children's audits, which are overseen by the registered manager. There are examples where the manager has identified issues from these audits and been able to address concerns with foster carers. The manager has also identified areas of success and is building on these.

Where needed, independent social workers carry out foster carer investigations. This provides an additional layer of scrutiny and objectivity and reduces opportunity for outcomes to be biased. Independent social workers are also used for the supervision of some staff, which helps to mitigate any conflicts of interest due to family members working together at the agency. This also helps to maintain clear boundaries and professionalism.

The panel functions well and applies proportionate scrutiny before reaching recommendations. The panel's objectivity and scrutiny are welcomed by the manager, who is receptive to feedback and learning. Panel members receive appropriate training and are skilled in their remit. There is good diversity, including people from different backgrounds, ethnicities and work experience. For example, there is a children's rights officer on the panel who ensures that the child's perspective remains at the forefront of discussions. Children have been creatively

included in the recruitment process, which allows them to ask perspective foster carers questions that are pertinent to their care experience.

Feedback from professionals regarding communication, progress made by children and the commitment and quality of care from foster carers has been unanimously positive.

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
The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy which— is intended to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect, and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect. The procedure under paragraph (1)(b) must, subject to paragraph (4), provide in particular for— liaison and co-operation with any local authority which is, or may be, making child protection enquiries in relation to any child placed by the fostering service provider, the prompt referral to the area authority of any allegation of abuse or neglect affecting any child placed by the fostering service provider, notification of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries involving a child placed by the fostering service provider, to the Chief Inspector, written records to be kept of any allegation of abuse or neglect, and of the action taken in response, consideration to be given to the measures which may be necessary to protect children placed with foster parents following an allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 12 (1)(a)(b) (3) (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	31 January 2025
If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the	31 January 2025

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))

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: 2567404

Registered provider: Star Fostering Ltd

Registered provider address: C/o Keith Willis Associates, Gothic House, Barker Gate, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG1 1JU

Responsible individual: Robert North

Registered manager: Sharon North

Telephone number: 01156711099

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Inspectors

Emma Dacres, Social Care Inspector
Laura Walker, Social Care Inspector

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