

UK Fostering North East

UK Fostering (NE) Limited

Suite 36 and 37, Business & Innovation Centre, Wearfield, Sunderland, Durham SR5 2TA

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency and manager registered with Ofsted in May 2020. The agency is a subsidiary company of UK Fostering Limited.

The agency offers a range of foster placements, including emergency, short-term and long-term placements.

At the time of the inspection, the agency was providing placements for 17 children and had 12 approved fostering households.

The agency's staff team is comprised of the responsible individual, a registered manager and two supervising social workers.

Inspection dates: 10 to 14 February 2025 and 20 and 21 May 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: 5 July 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are making good progress from their starting points. They enjoy trusted and secure relationships with their foster carers, who know them well and have a clear understanding of their needs. Children are included in their foster family's lives and are enabled to develop a sense of belonging. One child, who has lived with their foster carers for many years, said living with them was '10 out of 10' and they are 'just treated as part of the family'. Another child said, 'I have the best carer in the world.'

Foster carers are proud of the progress and achievements that children make. They support children with their learning and encourage children who struggle with attending school. Some children who have previously not attended mainstream school for some time now attend regularly. Foster carers take children to their health appointments and register with and access health services to meet their individual needs. Progress for some children is evident over a short period of living with their foster carers once they receive stable and nurturing care.

Children's views are important to the agency. A children's council is available for children nationally, and children in this region are encouraged to attend. Children's views about the agency contribute to improvements, such as additions to the children's app and activities they would like to engage in. In addition, the agency consults with children regularly about their individual care. Agency social workers regularly visit and spend time with children and capture their views.

Foster carers say that they feel well supported by the agency. New foster carers feel welcomed and supported from their initial introductions. Foster carers receive regular supervision and attend support groups to spend time together and reflect on their practice. Foster carers benefit from the size of this agency, as they can access support from a registered manager and social workers who know them and the children well. This includes out of hours when they may need support or advice.

The agency appoints independent social workers to complete the foster carer assessments. Assessments are detailed, and strengths as well as vulnerabilities are appropriately explored and evaluated. Assessments are undertaken in a timely way. On one occasion, an assessment was significantly delayed despite regular management oversight. A full reassessment was requested by the agency with a different independent social worker. While this resulted in a delay in the subsequent approval of the foster carers, it demonstrates the agency's commitment to good-quality assessments.

The fostering panel members have a diverse range of experiences and rigorously scrutinise assessments and reviews. The panel chair and vice chair are suitably experienced and have a good understanding of safeguarding and the agency. The

agency decision-maker is experienced and challenges decisions made by the panel when this is necessary.

Children who are new are welcomed sensitively and with careful planning. In advance of any introductions, children are provided with a profile of the foster carers and the things that they enjoy. Children are also given a welcome pack from the agency, which contains items to welcome the child. This supports children to settle in quicker.

When children experience planned moves on from their foster carers, they are well supported. Foster carers support children to return to their families, long-term care arrangements or adoption. Foster carers stay in touch with children and their new carers or family, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to the child. One family said, 'I can't speak highly enough of [name of foster carer]. [They] still offer support and daily calls.'

Not all children have experienced a well-planned move when carers have decided that they can no longer meet the children's needs. In these circumstances, the agency provides additional support, including out-of-hours visits, respite care, wraparound support, and increased supervising social worker visits to prevent placement breakdowns. If notice is still given by foster carers to end the placement, the registered manager undertakes a review, and foster carers are referred back to the fostering panel to ensure that their terms of registration remain appropriate.

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

There is a strong and proactive safeguarding culture across the agency where staff and foster carers understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff work with placing local authorities and foster carers to provide effective planning to manage and minimise risks to children.

The registered manager has oversight of all recorded incidents, including complaints, accidents and injuries and all safeguarding incidents. This information is then collated by the registered manager into a monthly safeguarding report, which helps to identify patterns and trends. Further scrutiny of the agency's safeguarding practice is undertaken by the safeguarding committee on a bimonthly basis where this information is reviewed and recommendations are made and subsequently acted on.

When children go missing from home, which is infrequent, foster carers act quickly to inform the agency, police and professionals involved with the child. The agency has a missing-from-home lead practitioner who ensures that procedures are followed. When a child has not had an opportunity to speak with an independent person when they return home, the agency's social worker will visit to ensure that the child has someone to talk to. Although this does not provide a person independent of the agency for the child, it shows children that the agency wants to listen and help them.

Foster carers and social workers develop positive working relationships with professionals. Foster carers attend meetings in relation to children with support from their social workers. This helps the agency keep up to date about the children's day-to-day experiences and changing needs. Foster carers and supervising social workers also advocate for children to ensure that they have the support in place that they need.

The agency carefully recruits supervising social workers and foster carers, and safe recruitment practice is embedded. This ensures that adults who join the agency have had all the necessary safeguarding checks completed. This prevents unsuitable adults from working with or caring for children who move into fostering families.

Foster carers understand the risks to children and their vulnerabilities. They take appropriate action to reduce risks and to keep children safe. However, while children's risk assessments are reviewed regularly, they do not always include all known risks to children and the agreed strategies for foster carers to use to support children to keep themselves safe. This recording issue has not had a negative impact on children's safety to date.

Most allegations and complaints against foster carers are managed well. However, on one occasion, while work was undertaken with the foster carers and further training was identified, the registered manager did not undertake a formal foster carers' standards of care review and did not refer the matter to the fostering panel. In addition, the registered manager did not notify Ofsted of the incident that led to the allegations. This means that, on this occasion, Ofsted was unable to review the information in a timely manner to ensure that the provider has taken appropriate action to keep children safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers are committed and care about the agency and their fostering families. The registered manager is passionate about her role and the outcomes for children. Foster carers are unanimous about the value the registered manager brings to the agency, and this is a strong factor in foster carers wanting to join and stay with the agency.

The registered manager and supervising social workers receive regular supervision. This is reflective, includes discussions about fostering families and safeguarding and is well recorded.

Foster carers have completed all required training and are clear about the expectations of them with regards to their training standards. Additional training is offered to carers to meet the children's specific individual needs.

The registered manager regularly consults with foster carers, children, and professionals about the service that they receive. This leads to changes in how they support children and foster carers. For example, foster carers expressed views about activities they would like to access, and an annual pass to Beamish Museum was provided to support this. Where appropriate, foster carers maintain contact with

birth families and facilitate family time with people who are important to the child. While informal feedback is provided via the foster carers, the agency is still to develop systems to formally consult with children's parents.

Although required statutory documentation for each child is requested from the placing local authority, this is not always received. The agency does not consistently implement the escalation policy to address this issue. This means that there are occasions when children move to live with foster carers and children's risks are not fully understood by the agency.

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the fostering service follows up with the responsible authority and, if necessary, challenges and escalates any gaps in the information provided to them on the child or the child's family, which may hinder the foster carer in providing a safe, caring environment that meets the child's needs and enables them to keep the child, other children in the fostering household and the foster carer him/herself safe. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards,' 15.2)
- The registered person should ensure that a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a particular member of the fostering household or staff member, including details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, and a record of any action taken and the decisions reached, are held on the person's file. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards,' 22.7)
- The registered person should ensure that entries in records, decisions, and reasons for them are kept up to date, legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising, distinguish between fact, opinion and third-party information and are signed and dated. Specifically, that risk assessments should contain all the known risks and strategies in place to mitigate the known risks. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards,' 26.5)
- The registered person should ensure that there is a system in place to notify, within 24 hours, persons, and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events in accordance with regulation 36. The system should include what to do when a notifiable event arises at the weekend. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards,' 29.1)

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.

The inspection started on 10 February 2025. Inspectors returned on 20 May 2025 to gather additional evidence in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#) policy.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: 2587198

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