

Nationwide Fostering

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The Atrium, 1 Harefield Road, Uxbridge UB8 1EX

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Nationwide Fostering is a privately owned independent fostering agency based in Uxbridge, West London. The service is a subsidiary company of UK Fostering Limited. The fostering service's statement of purpose states that it aims to provide the following types of foster care placements: short-term, bridging, long-term, respite, parent and child, emergency and sibling placements. Additionally, the service aims to provide foster care placements for children seeking asylum, youth offending placements and specialist fostering.

At the time of this inspection, the fostering agency had eight approved fostering households with five children in placement. This is the fostering service's first inspection following its registration with Ofsted in July 2020.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 5 to 9 July 2021

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: Not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: This is the fostering service's first inspection.

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make steady progress from their original starting points. Their overall experiences are positive, and they develop strong attachments to their foster families.

Children receive personalised care that meets their needs well and is in accordance with their care plans. Children live in stable environments and enjoy sound relationships with their foster carers who, in turn, clearly enjoy caring for them.

Children benefit from careful placement planning. Introductions between children and their prospective foster carers are sensitively co-ordinated, at the child's pace. The fostering service's matching process is effective, and placements are appropriate.

Children have opportunities to share their views, wishes and opinions. The fostering service continues to develop strategies to help children to influence the shape of the service. Children are aware of how to make a complaint; however, they have not made any complaints. Children would benefit from the children's guide identifying the person within the agency whom they can contact if they have any concerns.

Children's learning outcomes are good and they make good academic progress. School attendance is high, and children make steady progress from their starting points. Foster carers support children's education, for example by helping them with their homework and transporting children to school when their school is a significant distance from their home.

Children live healthy lifestyles. The fostering service encourages children's physical, emotional and social well-being. Children access primary healthcare services and receive advice and support from specialist services when this is required. The documented health information ensures that children receive the advice and treatment that they need.

Children engage in a range of their preferred physical, social and religious activities. Some foster carers have bought pets for children who had requested this. During the COVID-19 restrictions, foster carers worked hard to ensure that children took part in safe play activities. Staff and foster carers encourage children to take part in faith-based activities if they wish. For example, Ramadhan and Eid are celebrated and some children study the Quran.

Children enjoy meeting with their parents, siblings, other family members and friends when it is safe for them to do so. Staff and foster carers manage these arrangements carefully and there is a strong focus on the impact and best interests of children.

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

The fostering service works diligently to protect children from harm including neglect and abuse. Staff and foster carers ensure that the safety and well-being of children is central to their work. Staff ensure that foster carers are aware of children's

vulnerabilities and the underlying causes of the behaviours that they sometimes present with.

Staff ensure that placement plans and risk assessments highlight known and anticipated risks. Managers regularly review and update safeguarding documents that reflect children's changing needs and circumstances. Very few critical incidents occur. There have been no incidents of children going missing from home, child exploitation, self-harmful behaviour or misuse of drugs and alcohol. Children are not restrained.

The assessment, preparation and supervision of foster carers have a strong focus on child protection, and this supports the safe care of vulnerable children. Family safe care policies, in addition to those specific to individual children, lay the foundations of how fostering households will care for children safely. Furthermore, children benefit from the fostering service's child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures.

Staff and foster carers work hard to promote positive behaviour. Foster carers make good use of praise and incentives to help them to manage children's sometimes challenging behaviour. These strategies are largely effective. Foster carers are skilled in setting firm boundaries and clear structure to children's lives. This helps with children's understanding about appropriate conduct and there are fewer instances of children's challenging behaviour.

Staff recruitment and vetting practices are thorough, and all required checks are in place. This is to confirm that all staff are suitable to work with vulnerable children.

Foster carers' homes are safe and secure. Staff conduct checks that ensure that homes are well maintained, comfortable and that there are no health and safety concerns. A child on a video call to the inspector said, 'Look at my bedroom, it's nice and I have everything I need. Look, I even have fish in a fish tank here.'

The fostering service has strong and effective working partnerships with other agencies such as children's social workers, school personnel and health professionals. These collaborations are successful and promote a well-coordinated approach to safeguarding children.

A local authority social worker said, 'There are no safeguarding concerns raised since the children were placed with the current and previous foster carers. There is evidence of positive outcomes for the children due to the care provided in the placements.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leadership and management of this fostering service is strong. Leaders and managers have ambitious vision for the development of the service. This has been interrupted due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Managers have high aspirations for children. The registered manager has the appropriate experience, qualifications and skills to manage the fostering service.

The fostering service is meeting the aims and objectives as stated in the statement of purpose and there is good management oversight. Monitoring systems are robust, and this offers insight into the quality of the service. Monitoring reports offer action plans that help to improve the service.

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer. Staff support and training and development opportunities are good. Senior managers provide regular, meaningful supervision to the registered manager. This helps to ensure the registered manager's professional development and supports safe practices.

The fostering service's preparation of foster carers is thorough. This ensures that prospective and approved foster carers have good insight into the needs of children and have appropriate knowledge and skills. Foster carers complete identified core training and have personal development plans.

The service is well resourced to meet the needs of foster carers and children. Foster carers overwhelmingly say that support from the fostering service is excellent. Staff maintain good communication with foster carers. This was especially important during the recent COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The registered manager regularly visits children and foster carers at their homes. A foster carer said, 'I like my supervising social worker. She's professional and attends meetings with me. I'm happy with the way she works. There are lots of good things here. The agency is developing.'

The service's fostering panel operates effectively and efficiently. The fostering panel undertakes clear and appropriate analysis of the work presented at panel meetings. The administration of the fostering panel is effective and panel meeting minutes are appropriately detailed.

However, the membership of the fostering panel does not include a healthcare professional or someone who is care experienced. The panel is also not culturally diverse. Managers are currently seeking to increase the membership of the fostering panel to address these shortfalls.

The quality of foster carer assessments is good. These assessments are detailed, analytical, and highlight how applicants have demonstrated their suitability to be approved as foster carers. However, foster care agreements do not specify the terms of foster carers' approval. This is to ensure that all parties have agreed confirmation of the status of foster carers' approvals.

Foster carers, staff and managers work in close partnership with other professionals. A local authority social worker said, 'The children have settled as the carers are child-focused and patient, especially in light of their individual needs. The children also feel safe and they appear to trust their carers.'

Feedback from all stakeholders about this fostering service has been very positive. Stakeholders consistently say that the fostering service provides safe placements and that children have good experiences and make steady progress.

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, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
If a fostering service provider decide to approve X as a foster parent they must— give X notice in writing specifying any terms on which the approval is given, and enter into a written agreement with X covering the matters specified in Schedule 5 (the "foster care agreement"). (Regulation 27 (5)(a)(b))	1 November 2021

Recommendations

- The registered provider should ensure that the Children's Guide includes a summary of what the fostering service sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate. The registered manager should consider including in the children's guide the name of the person who deals with complaints. (National minimum standard 16.4)
- The registered provider should ensure that the number, skills, knowledge and experience of persons on the central list are sufficient. This will enable the fostering service to constitute panels that are equipped to make competent recommendations to the fostering service provider, taking into account the nature of the children and carers that the service caters for. The registered provider should consider recruiting panel members who are care experienced and have expertise in health. The registered provider should consider recruiting panel members from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds. (National minimum standard 14.8)

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: 2589848

Registered provider: Nationwide Fostering

Registered provider address: The Atrium, 1 Harefield Road, Uxbridge UB8 1EX

Responsible individual: Amarjit Dhull

Registered manager: Fatima Zaidi

Telephone number: 07718584011

Email address: enquiries@nationwidefostering.org.uk

Inspector

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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