

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.

The fostering service was registered with Ofsted in July 2020. At the time of this inspection, the fostering agency had 18 approved fostering households with 15 children in placement.

Inspection dates: 22 to 26 July 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children build trusting and secure relationships with foster carers, who are attentive to children's health, social and emotional needs. Children make good progress from their starting points. This is most notable with those that have travelled to this country as unaccompanied asylum seekers. One social worker wrote: 'The placement seems ideal towards meeting the need of the child in the care of the foster carer. There were age-appropriate toys within the setting and the foster carer has been observed engaged in meaningful activities with the child that promote stimulation and social skills.'

Children are either in school or are being supported by foster carers and the fostering agency to attend education. Foster carers and staff place great emphasis on helping children to achieve positive learning outcomes. Foster carers and staff work well with schools and attend relevant meetings in respect of children.

In many instances, foster carers share the same language, culture and religion as the children they are caring for. This helps children to settle and feel comfortable. Consequently, the incidence of placement breakdown is low. Children experience stability within this fostering agency.

Children have access to children's guides in a wide range of languages, including Kurdish, Albanian, Arabic and Spanish. Foster carers help children to understand about fostering and their rights and entitlements. Children rarely make complaints. However, the children's guide for younger children is not easy for children to read and understand.

The fostering agency organises social events for children and their foster carers. One child described to the inspector with delight how they could not wait for a planned trip to the seaside. Foster carers support children to develop their interests, such as joining cricket and football clubs. This means that children develop confidence and independence skills and build self-esteem.

Social workers for children report having positive relationships with foster carers and fostering staff. Plans for children are understood and implemented. Consequently, children are supported effectively to see family and friends, engage in therapeutic support to address specific needs and achieve permanence.

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

Foster carers and fostering staff work to ensure that children are protected from harm. Children say that they feel safe living with their foster carers. Risks for children are known and understood by foster carers and staff. Foster carers talk to children about risks and children understand, for instance, why access to the internet or smartphones may be restricted.

Children who spoke to the inspector consistently said that they had a trusted adult they could talk to if they had a worry or concern. Children do not go missing from their fostering homes, and incidences related to children's safety within the home rarely occur. Newly approved foster carers reported that the preparation and training they had received 'opened their eyes to the impact of trauma on children's actions' and the need 'to keep children safe.'

Foster carers help children to manage their emotions and behaviour. Foster carers provide children with clear boundaries within the home. Foster carers, where necessary, engage with local authority therapeutic services, undertaking specific training. As a result, foster carers have the tools and knowledge to respond effectively to children's emotional needs.

Fostering staff see children alone in their foster home on a regular basis to ascertain their views and feelings. However, where children have limited English, children may be disadvantaged at these visits through not having sufficient command of the language to raise concerns.

Managers and staff take appropriate action and follow the agency safeguarding procedures when allegations or concerns regarding foster carers are raised. Managers and fostering staff liaise effectively with the external safeguarding network as needed. Consequently, there is a well-coordinated approach to the protection of children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The fostering agency has an experienced and qualified management team with extensive experience in child placement and children's social care. Managers and fostering staff understand their roles and responsibilities but are also prepared to undertake additional tasks to ensure children's needs are met and foster carers are supported, for example taking children to essential appointments at short notice if foster carers are not available. Leaders, managers and fostering staff have high aspirations for children and demonstrate this.

Leaders and managers have clear processes to ensure that staff within the agency are suitably qualified and vetted. However, in one case reviewed by the inspector, there was no evidence to show how leaders and managers had demonstrated the suitability and experience of a staff member for a position within the fostering agency.

Foster carers' records for children are varied. Some reflect the day-to-day lived experience of children well while others have minimal or missing recordings. In one case, there had been no recordings for three months. This does not help children who may wish to access their care records relating to their time in foster care later in their childhood or adulthood.

Fostering staff receive regular supervision from managers, which focuses on professional development as well as children and foster families. Fostering staff report being well supported by managers with an open door policy being in place, where managers are available. Fostering staff have access to mandatory and specialist training. Appraisals are undertaken by managers but the views of the children whom fostering staff directly work with are not gained to inform this process.

Leaders and managers actively seek to consult with children, staff, foster carers and external stakeholders to improve the overall care and experiences of children. Areas of strength and improvement are identified by managers in reports and surveys. However, Ofsted has not received the registered manager's regular report that reviews the quality of care provided by the agency for the last year. This has not enabled the regulator's independent scrutiny of the fostering agency's care of children.

Foster carers report that they receive particularly good support from fostering staff, who are available whenever they need them. Foster carers are reviewed annually by the foster carer reviewing officer and receive appropriate training through online and face-to-face presentations. However, records of training undertaken by foster carers are not always reliable. Records showed that one foster care had not attended training for two years, but the manager stated that this was not correct. Personal development plans do not contain sufficient detail on the development needs of foster carers.

Leaders and managers have been successful in recruiting foster carers to meet the needs of a range of children. Assessments of prospective foster carers are timely and demonstrate a satisfactory level of analysis and evidence to support recommendations. The panel chair, the agency decision-maker and the registered manager meet regularly to discuss practice issues. Panel composition ensures that the right knowledge and experience are available to make recommendations to the agency decision-maker. As a result, the approval process and fostering panel are effective.

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— keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and children’s guide, notify the Chief Inspector of any such revision within 28 days. (Regulation 4 (a)(b))	1 October 2024
The fostering service provider must not— employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so. For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person— has the qualifications, skills, and experience necessary for the work they are to perform. (Regulation 20 (1)(a) (3)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that they comply with the agency’s own procedures for recording how a person meets the criteria for a post.	1 October 2024
The registered person must maintain a system for— monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. The registered person must provide the Chief Inspector with a written report in respect of any review conducted for the	1 October 2024

purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to any local authority. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (2))	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers' personal development plans set out how they will be supported to undertake ongoing training and development that is appropriate to their development needs and experience. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 40, paragraph 20.5)
- The registered person should ensure that support and training are made available to foster carers, including hard-to-reach carers, to assist them in meeting the specific needs of the children they are caring for or are expected to care for. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 40, paragraph 20.8)
- The registered person should ensure that when staff have their performance individually and formally appraised, and where they are working with children, this appraisal takes into account any views of children the service is providing for. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 49, paragraph 24.6)
- The registered person should ensure that the service has the facilities to work with children who speak English as an additional language. This relates specifically to visits to children undertaken by the fostering social worker. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 51, paragraph 25.12)
- 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. This relates specifically to the quality and content of foster carer logs. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 52, paragraph 26.6)
- The registered person should regularly monitor 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', page 51, paragraph 25.2)

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: 2589848

Registered provider: Nationwide Fostering

Registered provider address: Bridge House, High Street, Dartford, Kent DA1 1DJ

Responsible individual: Amarjit Dhull

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Inspector

Colin Bent, Social Care Inspector

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