

Sure Start Fostering Agency

Sure Start Fostering Agency Limited

13 Clements Court, Clements Lane, Ilford IG1 2QY

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a privately owned independent fostering agency, and the manager registered with Ofsted in 2021.

The agency provides short-term and long-term care placements for children, including those who may need to live with their brothers and sisters. The agency also provides placements for unaccompanied children who moved from other countries without their parents.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had 33 approved foster families, caring for 51 children.

Inspection dates: 18 to 22 May 2026

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: 13 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Summary of findings

Children receive good-quality care from foster carers who are committed, nurturing and well supported by the agency. Children make good progress and benefit from positive relationships with their foster carers, who advocate strongly on their behalf. Foster carers benefit from regular training, supervision, home visits and support groups that strengthen their ability to meet children's needs effectively. Leaders and managers are passionate about improving children's experiences and demonstrate a clear commitment to continuous improvement. Feedback from children, foster carers, staff and external professionals is positive and reflects the agency's child-centred ethos.

However, some areas require further development to ensure consistently strong practice. These include improving timeliness of recording, strengthening assessments of foster carers' wider family responsibilities, enhancing induction arrangements for staff and further strengthening the support provided to foster carers during investigations.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from nurturing relationships with foster carers who are committed to helping them to make progress and experience positive outcomes. Foster carers know the children in their care well and provide them with warmth, consistent care and encouragement. Children say that they feel part of the families they live with. One child said, 'They always include me in family events. We like to talk to each other and help each other.'

Children make good progress from their starting points. Many children improve their school attendance, emotional wellbeing and social relationships because of the care they receive. Foster carers advocate strongly for children and work effectively with education, health and other professionals to ensure that children get the support they need.

Children are encouraged to participate in activities, pursue their hobbies and develop positive relationships in their communities, and many do so. Children particularly enjoy go-karting and seaside trips arranged by the agency's staff. One child said that they have fun things to do, such as going to the pantomime and having days out. Another child was excited about the children's support group and picnic, taking place during the weekend after the inspection. This was part of several planned events for 'foster care fortnight', which included a 'cake and coffee day' for foster carers, and a family photo collage competition that foster carers and children were keen to take part in. Entries included lovely short stories about what fostering meant for their families.

Feedback received during the inspection was consistently positive about the outcomes for children. Children, foster carers, staff and external professionals praised the quality of care provided. Foster carers described feeling valued and supported by staff, while external professionals highlighted the agency's child-centred approach and positive communication.

Foster carers are thoughtful in how they manage endings and take steps to ensure that children do not feel rejected when they leave. For example, rather than a child leaving with all their belongings, a foster carer arranged for their possessions to be collected later, helping to create a more natural and less abrupt move. These sensitive approaches help children to maintain their dignity and sense of belonging during what can be an emotionally challenging time.

In some cases, the positive and trusting relationships with foster carers continue after children move on. Some children and their parents remain in contact with foster carers, who continue to provide emotional support and encouragement, demonstrating the lasting and meaningful impact that these caring relationships can have on children's lives.

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

Children are cared for by foster carers who understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know how to respond to concerns. Foster carers receive regular safeguarding training, which is further reinforced through supervision and support discussions.

Staff work effectively with safeguarding agencies and professionals to ensure that risks to children are managed well. Children say that they feel safe and well cared for.

Foster carers understand children's individual vulnerabilities and provide support that helps children stay safe, while promoting their independence. Supervising social workers visit foster carers and children regularly, enabling them to monitor care effectively and respond quickly to emerging concerns.

Risk assessments are detailed and identify strategies to reduce risks to children. However, recording practice is variable in quality. Some records are not updated promptly, which reduces the effectiveness of management oversight and can result in delays in important information being available to staff and foster carers. Although these shortfalls have not resulted in children being unsafe, timely and accurate recording is essential to support effective safeguarding practice and decision-making.

Managers respond appropriately when safeguarding concerns arise, and they ensure that investigations are carried out in partnership with relevant agencies. Foster carers are usually provided with guidance and support during this process. However, emotional and practical support arrangements for foster carers during safeguarding or standard of care investigations are not consistently strong. Some foster carers

reported feeling anxious and uncertain during these processes, potentially impacting on placement stability.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers are ambitious for children, and they are passionate about improving children's experiences and outcomes. They have created a stable staff team that works effectively to provide children with positive and nurturing homes. Staff and foster carers describe leaders as approachable, supportive and child focused. There is a strong ethos across the agency of ensuring that children are at the centre of all practice decisions.

Monitoring and quality assurance systems show many areas of strength and help leaders recognise areas requiring development. Managers act promptly when practice concerns are found and seek to improve outcomes for children through reflective oversight and support. However, leaders have not consistently ensured that revised statements of purpose are sent to the regulator following review, as required by regulation. There is a requirement in relation to this.

Leaders have established effective support systems for foster carers, including regular training, supervision, home visits and access to support groups to continually develop their skills and knowledge. Training opportunities are varied and relevant to the needs of the children. Foster carers value the relationships they have with supervising social workers and managers and report that staff are accessible and responsive when they need guidance. As a result, foster carers are well equipped to meet children's emotional, social and developmental needs.

Assessments of foster carers' wider family responsibilities are not always sufficiently comprehensive. In one case, the impact of caring responsibilities and family commitments on the carers' ability to meet the needs of the children was not fully evaluated. This limits leaders' ability to fully understand the pressures in fostering households and ensure that carers have sufficient capacity to provide consistently good care.

Induction arrangements for some staff who are new to fostering do not consistently provide sufficient information about fostering-specific roles, responsibilities and expectations. This means that some staff require additional support to fully understand agency procedures and practice standards during the early stages of their employment.

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))	3 July 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record-keeping and take action when needed. In particular, staff should check and update records in a timely way. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.2)
- The registered person should ensure that there is a good-quality learning and development programme, which includes induction and post-qualifying and in-service training that staff are supported to undertake. In particular, staff who are new to working in a fostering service should have an effective induction to help them to fully understand their role. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 23.1)
- The registered person should ensure that they only suggest foster carers to local authorities as a potential match for a child if the foster carer can be expected to meet the child's assessed needs, and the impact of the placement on existing household members has been considered. Where gaps are identified, the fostering service should work with the responsible authority to ensure the placement plan sets out any additional training, resource or support required. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 15.1)
- The registered person should ensure that investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are handled fairly, quickly and consistently in a way that provides effective protection for the child, and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation. In particular, leaders should explore whether people who are the subject of the allegation require additional support. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 22.9)

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: 2615940

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Inspector

Thobekile Bandama, Social Care Inspector

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