

Embrace Fostering Service

Embrace Therapeutic Fostering Services

Mayflower Cottage, Clumber Park, Worksop S80 3BQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Embrace Fostering Service is managed by an experienced manager and responsible individual. The agency offers a range of placements for children. These include respite, bridging, emergency, long- and short-term placements and permanency. The agency also supports foster carers to provide placements for sanctuary-seeking children.

Currently, this service supports 11 fostering households and cares for 16 children.

Inspection dates: 11 to 15 August 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	outstanding
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 23 January 2023

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 are at the centre of practice at Embrace Fostering. Staff and foster carers understand the family ethos of the agency and commit to it wholeheartedly. Foster carers see children as part of their families and are committed to them. Consequently, placement stability is good, and very few children experience unplanned or immediate endings.

Children are supported effectively to remain with their foster carers whenever possible. When children experience difficulties in settling, there is strong multi-agency collaboration to identify and implement appropriate support strategies. Transitions, when necessary, are well planned and carefully managed to ensure continuity and emotional security. In instances of unplanned endings, carers and the agency advocate robustly on behalf of the children, ensuring that their needs and views remain central to decision-making processes and that they receive the support they require throughout.

Children's needs are well understood when they come to live with foster families. The agency works hard to ensure that required documentation is in place, and it has a system for acquiring local authority reports should these not be provided in a timely way. Careful matching is completed, ensuring that children are cared for by foster carers who can respond effectively to their needs.

Children are settled in their homes and are making progress relative to their starting points. Children express feeling happy and safe in their homes. Children are having special and unique experiences living with their foster carers and are given opportunities to develop their interests and hobbies. Children's achievements, both big and small, are consistently recognised and celebrated. This helps children to feel valued and promotes their confidence and motivation.

Foster carers consistently report feeling well supported by the service and their social workers. They receive regular and good-quality supervision and have monthly access to a support group run by an in-house therapist. These sessions focus on developing foster carers' understanding of caring in a therapeutic way but also allow for foster carers to receive bespoke training as required. One foster carer said, 'Embrace were the ones who went above and beyond. Their support before, during and after approval has never faltered, and we trust them completely.'

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

The risks for children are well understood by the manager and social workers. They understand the required care needed to keep children safe and promote their welfare. The manager retains good oversight of safeguarding incidents and supports social workers and foster carers in responding effectively to these. However, risk assessments do not always expand on all specific known risks for children.

Children do not go missing regularly from their foster carers. When there has been missing episodes, social workers have worked well with children to understand the risk that this poses to them. Effective collaborative working with safeguarding partners has encouraged adaptations to care plans that help children be increasingly safe. Social workers are confident to challenge external agencies and advocate effectively for foster carers.

The service benefits from two committed and knowledgeable social workers. They visit children regularly and work hard to establish meaningful relationships with them. Children are seen alone, and their views are regularly gathered. As a result, children see them as people they can trust and can turn to for support.

The agency responds effectively to concerns about standards of care or allegations. When children raise concerns, these are quickly escalated to safeguarding partners and duly explored. The panel is used to oversee reviews at an earlier stage to ensure the ongoing appropriateness of the adults to foster. While there is a robust complaints policy in place, this has not been developed to include the agreed response to less-serious worries raised by children.

There are systems in place to support carers to access breaks if needed. Where these are not used, there are alternative options, such as having the equivalent funds renumeralated. This helps carers feel appreciated and further supports stability for children.

When serious incidents occur, children are not held by their foster carers. However, there have been incidents where this could have been necessary to ensure the safety of children and where touch was used to help children remain calm. The agency has not explored if some foster carers may benefit from appropriate training in physical intervention to support them in keeping children safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The agency is run by an inspirational and committed registered manager. She has created a culture of kindness within the agency, which is modelled at every level of the service. The manager is very invested in children's experiences and is aspirational for them. She is investing in a model of care based on therapeutic practice, and this is helping to ensure that children are at the heart of their support to foster families. Work has begun on embedding this approach throughout documentation and recordings from both staff and foster carers.

Panel is appropriately quorate and independent. The membership reflects a variety of experience, including a care-experienced person. Panel minutes are clear; they evidence robust decision-making and a willingness by panel members to challenge each other. A question devised from the consultation with children is now built into every panel. The agency benefits from an independent and scrupulous agency decision-maker. It is evident that she carefully considers each panel recommendation and is committed to challenging where appropriate. The manager is proactive to

ensure that recommendations about support or follow-up actions are attended to promptly. This is driving forward good practice.

Staff benefit from regular face-to-face team meetings, supported by weekly check-ins. These are well established and valued by staff, who report that they provide a helpful forum for communication and reflection. Meetings are consistent in format, with clear agendas and accurately recorded minutes. There is a strong focus on the needs of carers, including detailed discussion of individual cases and recruitment drives. When staff raise concerns, these are listened to and addressed through open and solution-focused discussions. Staff suggestions are actively encouraged and implemented where appropriate. This contributes to a positive team culture in which staff feel listened to, empowered and valued.

Staff receive supervision that is regular and well embedded across the service. Staff report that they find these sessions beneficial in supporting their role. Supervision is consistent in quality and provides dedicated time for detailed discussions about foster carers, with a strong focus on the needs and progress of children in the home. Staff are supported to reflect on their practice, promoting continuous learning and professional development. The manager also receives regular supervision from the panel vice chair. This has the potential to impact on the independency of their decision-making during panels. The agency acknowledged this during the inspection and has plans to address this.

Feedback from professionals is overwhelmingly positive. They consistently commend the agency's ethos and effective partnership working with the team around the child. One professional said, 'Their customer service is second to none, and they are one of my preferred providers without a shadow of a doubt.'

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the wishes, feelings and views of children and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring foster carers and developing the fostering service. This relates to the service having a clear process for exploring children's concerns when they do not meet local authority designated officer threshold. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 1.7)
- The registered person should ensure that the service implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. This relates to ensuring that assessments include clear recording of known risks for children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 4.5)
- The registered person should ensure that support and training are made available to foster carers to assist them in meeting the specific needs of the children they are caring for or are expected to care for. This relates to foster carers having physical intervention training where appropriate. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.8)
- The registered person should ensure that suitable arrangements exist for professional supervision of the agency's registered person or manager of a local authority fostering service. This relates to the registered manager being supervised by someone not involved in fostering panel decision-making. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 24.3)

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: 2661954

Registered provider: Embrace Therapeutic Fostering Services

Registered provider address: Mayflower Clumber Cottage, Clumber Park,
Worksop S80 3BQ

Responsible individual: Derrell Crump

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Inspectors

Louise Copping, Social Care Inspector
Jess Baines, Social Care Inspector

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