

Skylark Fostering

Skylark Fostering Limited

Unit 11 Oak House, Waterside South, Lincoln, Lincolnshire LN5 7FB

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Skylark Fostering is an independent fostering agency. It provides a range of foster placements, including short-term, long-term, bridging and respite placements. At the time of this inspection, the agency had two fostering households and two children placed.

The manager registered with Ofsted in 2024.

Children and foster carers were spoken to during this inspection.

Inspection dates: 10 to 14 November 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The independent fostering agency is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The agency has approved two fostering households with two children placed in recent weeks. The foster carers are new to the role and developing their confidence and skills. Overall, they have made a positive start to their fostering careers. However, they are still very much learning about their responsibilities. Carers are currently offering warm and nurturing care to children, which helps them to settle. One child is developing trust and beginning to share some of their life experiences. Another child is making progress, particularly with health issues that are now better understood.

Three children have had to move on sooner than planned. Two children were placed with new carers whose needs exceeded the skills and experience of the foster carers. They had not had training to meet the children's those needs. Another child moved on at the request of the carers. The foster carers showed little flexibility when working alongside professionals to support a positive end for the child. The registered manager worked with the local authority providing support to the carers and children in these situations until new fostering families were found. Managers have shown learning from these experiences.

The manager has not ensured that children have well-considered care plans. There are no specific documents detailing children's day-to-day care. There are gaps in information for one child's health. This means that foster carers do not have clear guidance about how to meet children's needs. This is particularly important, as fosters carers are new. In some instances, foster carers have made decisions about children's care without consulting with the agency. For one child, this happened very soon into their placement, which caused the child some anxiety.

Children's records are not complete. Managers have not recorded important events or conversations held with or about children. Key documents are missing for one child including the local authority care plan, the personal education plan and reviews of the child's overall care. This impacts on the continuity of information for the child and foster carer. The manager has tried to obtain documents. However, attempts have not been effective or escalated.

Children are supported to develop routines and have fun. They attend school and one child has achieved 100% attendance. Children's reading has improved, and their achievements are celebrated. Children do lots of activities. They go to after-school clubs, have days out and celebrate special occasions. This makes them feel part of a family and build confidence. Children are consulted about who they want to spend time with. Their feelings are considered when time with family and friends is being arranged.

Foster carers are well supported through the recruitment and assessment process. Assessments are completed in a sensitive and timely way with good oversight from the assessment manager. There is a good focus on safeguarding. Foster carers have positive relationships with managers post approval. However, the registered manager is currently the manager and supervising social worker for carers. His time has been pressured, which has impacted on his ability to fulfil both roles effectively. One carer commented that they were unsure when the manager was responding as a manager or social worker.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Managers are aware of children's risks and vulnerabilities. However, information has not been translated well enough into children's risk management plans. For example, a young child has made disclosures of previous significant harm. Strategies to manage the impact of this are not well thought out. For example, the foster carer does not take the child to school every day. The child has not been asked how they feel about this. Another child has allergies. Their risk assessment does not include sufficient information about the type and severity of the allergies. This can put children at increased risk of harm.

Foster carers are making decisions about children's welfare without asking the agency. A family member has stayed overnight in one fostering household without having relevant checks. There were no additional safety measures in place to mitigate this arrangement. This demonstrates that foster carers are not yet clear about their safeguarding role.

Managers have not consistently responded to concerns raised by or about children in a timely way. One child was placed with carers with evidence of soreness on their body. The manager read this in a foster carer log. He did not demonstrate professionally curiosity about what could have caused this. As such, foster carers responded to the situation without appropriate management oversight.

One child has made an allegation of sexual harm. At the time this information was shared, it was possible that the concern related to someone in a fostering household. Despite this, the manager did not invoke relevant procedures until the following day. More positively, the child was able to speak to a trusted professional afterwards and the concern was clarified as being outside of the fostering household.

Children have trusted adults to talk to. One child is sharing some experiences from their past, which are distressing to hear. However, the foster carer and their family provide sensitive responses. They involve the child in sharing information with professionals so that action can be taken. Another child has been helped to make progress with a health issue to good effect.

Foster carers help children with managing their feelings. They are trained to support children if they become overwhelmed or distressed. There have not been any significant behavioural incidents for the children currently placed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager and responsible individual are experienced, resilient and determined. They are working relentlessly to establish their agency. Managers have developed positive relationships with external agencies who value their aspirations for children. Professionals spoken to on inspection provided good feedback. However, they have been impacted by time and resource pressures as a growing business. Both individuals undertake several roles with competing demands. This has impacted on the ability of the registered manager to ensure good oversight of the day-to-day care of children. Both managers recognise this, and they are taking steps to rectify the situation by employing a supervising social worker.

Managers do not have robust systems in place to actively and regularly monitor the quality of care provided. This includes serious incidents involving children. Time pressures have affected managers' capacity to conduct regular audits of files, despite knowing that information about children is not adequately recorded. Following inspection, the registered manager plans to ensure that gaps are addressed.

The managers have put significant effort into recruiting carers through a range of approaches. This work has been time consuming, but has resulted in attracting several applicants going through to the assessment process. Applicants have differing skills. Managers are confident to refuse applicants whom they deem unsuitable.

The responsible individual provides regular supervision for the registered manager in terms of his managerial role. Specific case supervision has not been provided to discuss the foster carers and children in detail. This has reduced opportunity for the responsible individual to identify and address shortfalls in practice.

Foster carers receive regular supervision from the registered manager, which they find helpful. However, records are not kept for all the supervision sessions. This means that carers do not have the opportunity to review the content and any actions set. This hinders the accountability of the supervision process. Managers support foster carers with training. However, they currently do not have any first-aid training, which is required for their role.

The panel has a range of experienced professionals from diverse backgrounds. It is new in its formation and still establishing as a group. The panel has considered fostering assessments and provided well-considered recommendations. It is yet to consider foster carer reviews and any other matters. Panel members receive a useful

induction and opportunity to receive training. There are positive working relationships between panel, agency decision-maker and the fostering agency.

The agency has ensured that all staff and panel members have been recruited through thorough vetting procedures.

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 registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to— the size of the fostering agency, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by the fostering agency, and the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children placed by the fostering agency, carry on or manage the fostering agency (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill. (Regulation 8 (1)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to the manager keeping records and obtaining key documents in relation to children's care. It also relates to the manager regularly monitoring 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. This specifically relates to managers ensuring that foster carers understand the fostering role and make decisions about children's care in consultation with the agency and other relevant professionals. This specifically relates to managers ensuring that there are systems in place to document care planning for children and that care is regularly reviewed in line with children's needs.	30 January 2026
The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that— the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times.	30 January 2026

(Regulation 11 (a)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that strategies to manage children’s risks and vulnerabilities are well considered and clearly recorded so that children are kept safe. This also relates to managers responding in a timely way to concerns raised about children.	
The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy which— is intended to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect. (Regulation 12 (1)(a)) This specifically relates to managers sharing information with relevant agencies immediately following an allegation of harm made by children. Managers need to ensure that clear records are kept of allegations made by children and actions taken in response.	30 January 2026
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. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to having systems in place to monitor serious incidents that occur involving children as stated under schedule 6 and the overall quality of care provided for children.	30 January 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the fostering service only suggests foster carers to local authorities as a potential match for a child if the foster carer can reasonably 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 that the placement plan sets out any additional training, resource or support required. (‘Fostering services: national minimum standards’, page 32, paragraph 15.1)

- The registered person should ensure that each approved foster carer receives supervision, and that records of supervision sessions are kept, signed and shared with the foster carers. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 42, paragraph 21.8)
- The registered person should ensure that suitable arrangements exist for the professional supervision of the agency's registered person or manager of a local authority fostering service. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 49, paragraph 24.3)
- The registered person should ensure that there are sound employment practices and good support for all its staff and volunteers. This includes having sufficient staffing to fulfil the roles of the agency. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 49 paragraph 24.1)

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.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: 2798877

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Inspectors

Laura Walker, Social Care Inspector

Laura Copus, Social Care Inspector

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