

Attuned to Children Limited

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Great North Business Centre, 82 Great North Road, Hatfield AL9 5BL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency was registered on 8 October 2024. It provides a range of placements including emergency, bridging, respite, short-term, long-term, permanent and parent and child placements. At the time of the inspection, there were four approved fostering households, and four children were receiving support from the agency's approved foster carers. The registered manager has been in post since registration and is currently undertaking an appropriate management qualification.

Inspection dates: 8 to 12 September 2025

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: not previously inspected

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from good-quality foster care that enables them to thrive and reach their potential. One child's social worker commented, 'The foster carer has greater insight than most and promotes my child's emotional well-being.'

The children are happy. One child said of their foster home, 'It's good. My foster carer takes care of me, is a good cook and gives me privacy.' Children are supported educationally, emotionally and in relation to their health needs by foster carers who want the best for them. Foster carers always attend children's meetings and reviews to ensure they represent the child's views and advocate for them. Carers both understand and have an input into the local authority's plans for the child.

Carers support the children to develop life skills to enable them to become more independent. They are given encouragement to take part in leisure activities to support their health, social skills and sense of achievement, such as swimming or going to the gym.

The agency staff encourage children to give feedback and seek their views regularly. Children's achievements are acknowledged and rewarded, including those of the birth children of foster carers. This promotes inclusivity in the fostering household.

Matching of children with their foster families is well considered and child focused. Foster carers are not under any pressure to take a child whose needs they cannot meet. However, when placing a child with foster carers who are already caring for a child, the consent of that local authority is not explicitly gained or recorded. This has the potential to undermine children's stability within the household.

If placements are at risk of disruption, placement stability meetings are arranged to identify how to provide additional support. If placements do disrupt, the agency manager holds a reflective meeting to analyse what went wrong and take learning from it. This reflective approach helps to minimise the risk of further placement disruptions and improve matching considerations.

When children move on, foster carers provide information and photos for the child, so they have a proper record of their time in the foster home. This enhances a child's understanding of their life story in the future.

When people are interested in becoming foster carers, they receive a warm welcome. The application and assessment processes are completed without undue delay. The provider has developed detailed guidance for independent social workers undertaking assessments of foster carers to ensure that the agency's standards are consistently met. One newly approved foster carer said agency staff 'are friendly and supportive'.

The agency employs a therapist to provide regular clinical support at foster carers' support groups, in addition to individual work with families and children as

appropriate. This is a useful resource that encourages foster carers to share their experiences. They benefit from this reflective space to learn and develop.

Foster carers feel well supported by the agency and speak highly of it. Comments include: 'The agency is really helpful and a pleasure to work with. It is always here to support us in any way. I couldn't ask for anyone better,' 'They are always available to help with challenges,' and 'Everyone on their team has been nothing short of astounding and patient and helpful'.

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

Children feel safe in their foster homes and feel able to talk to their foster carers about any worries. They are protected from harm by carers who are knowledgeable and trained in safeguarding and have their best interests at heart. If children are ill, have accidents or require medical intervention, foster carers promptly seek appropriate help.

Risk is well identified and managed. The suitably detailed support plans, which incorporate risk assessments, are current and thorough. These provide the necessary guidance to foster carers to enable them to manage risk safely. Any concerns are reported promptly to the agency and the local authority, with regular communication to get up-to-date information about ongoing actions.

If children are at risk of harm or going missing, carers know what to do. Carers are supported by a responsive out-of-hours service. The agency takes appropriate action and liaises with relevant professionals throughout any such incidents.

There have been no allegations or standards of care investigations. However, there is clear guidance about how these are to be managed, with a strong focus on safeguarding, independent scrutiny as well as support for foster carers.

When carers have struggled to manage situations and children's behaviour, the agency has consulted with the child's local authority to obtain more support. In addition, the agency has used the skills of the agency's own therapist to provide advice and guidance. This has proved beneficial in supporting foster carers to manage tricky situations and help keep the child in the fostering family.

Children's safety is prioritised through the recruitment, assessment and preparation of foster carers. Agency staff undertake two unannounced visits a year and speak to children alone on a regular basis.

The recruitment of staff and panel members is generally robust. However, the verification of why employment has ended if a person has worked with vulnerable children or adults has not been undertaken. This is important as it provides additional safeguards to protect children from unsuitable people being employed by the agency.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers ensure that the agency provides a good-quality service that meets the needs of the children. Staff, other than the manager, are currently employed on an independent basis, although this is planned to change as the service develops. The staff understand the agency's ethos and feel well supported by leaders and managers. However, the therapist is not currently supervised by the manager. This means that formal mechanisms for support and monitoring performance are lost.

The leaders and managers are very present and know the carers and children well. They support the carers well to ensure the children's needs are met. Carers receive regular, thorough and reflective supervision that is well recorded.

Monitoring arrangements are effective. Feedback from foster carers, children and other professionals, as well as reflective meetings after placement endings, is used well to support improvement. As a result, leaders and managers understand the service's strengths and areas for development.

The manager ensures that positive working relationships are developed with other professionals. The manager works collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes for children. They provide both advocacy as well as appropriate challenge. Feedback from stakeholders emphasised the agency's open and honest approach to prioritising the needs of children in all its interactions.

Children's records are child focused. Foster carers are encouraged to write their logs frequently, positively and to the child in order to provide a coherent narrative for the child should they read their records either now or in the future.

The membership of the fostering panel is diverse and includes a care-experienced person, a former foster carer and other members with a range of relevant and diverse professional experience. However, panel members do not have sufficiently clear guidance about their roles and responsibilities. Panel minutes do not adequately demonstrate panel's discussion and sufficient professional curiosity about the suitability of prospective carers nor the reasons for the recommendation.

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 not— employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so, or allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so. This paragraph applies to any person who is employed, other than by the fostering service provider, in a position in which that person may in the course of their duties have regular contact with children placed by the fostering service. For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person— is of integrity and good character, has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work they are to perform, is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform, and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, in accordance with paragraph 4 of schedule 1, verify, so far as reasonably practicable, the reason why the employment or position ended where a person has previously worked in a position whose duties involved work with children or vulnerable adults.	14 November 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that there is careful pre-placement planning, including consideration of the impact on any children already living in the foster home. Consent to such a placement must be given by the fostering service provider and any other responsible authority with a child already placed with the foster carer. This will require consultation with the social worker of any other child placed in the foster home. ('The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services', page 14, paragraph 3.2)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 24.4)
- The registered person should ensure that written minutes of panel meetings are accurate and clearly cover the key issues and views expressed by panel members and record the reasons for its recommendation. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 14.7)
- The registered person should ensure that each person on the central list has access to appropriate training and skills development and is kept abreast of relevant changes to legislation and guidance. In particular, ensure that clear guidance and training are in place for panel members in respect of their roles and responsibilities. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 23.11)

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: 2807566

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Inspector

Rosemary Chapman, Social Care Inspector

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