

The Children's Family Trust

The Children's Family Trust

Hanbury Court, Harris Business Park, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove,
Worcestershire B60 4DJ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This agency is a registered charity. It is one of four regional agencies that are currently registered with Ofsted. The agency provides short-term, emergency, long-term and respite placements. The agency also supports children on 'staying put' arrangements.

At the time of the inspection, the agency had 45 approved fostering households and 69 children living with foster carers.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since November 2023. She is an experienced registered manager and is appropriately qualified.

Inspection dates: 14 to 18 July 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 3 October 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The foundation of this agency remains its unwavering commitment to supporting children throughout their childhood and into adulthood, providing them with a family for life. This ethos, combined with the agency's charitable status and welcoming, family-oriented culture, is a source of pride for managers, staff and foster families. It continues to attract new carers and professionals who share the agency's values.

Children experience secure, trusting relationships with their foster families. Foster carers demonstrate an excellent understanding of the children's individual needs, and children flourish as a result of the consistent, therapeutic care they receive.

Careful attention is given to matching children with the right foster families. As a result, most children settle quickly and grow up as part of a loving family that meets their developmental needs throughout childhood and beyond.

When children experience difficulties within their foster placements, managers work diligently to maintain their care within the agency, in line with the agency's commitment to providing lifelong family relationships. Where moves are necessary, children often transition to families with whom they already have a connection, such as through short breaks or agency events. This approach minimises disruption and supports continuity of care.

The agency places a strong emphasis on promoting and sustaining positive family relationships. Many children have lived with their foster carers for several years and are fully embraced as members of their foster families. Some foster families care for siblings, enabling brothers and sisters to remain together. The agency celebrates foster carers who offer children permanency, even when this results in the loss of a fostering placement. All children, whether fostered, adopted, birth children, or those subject to special guardianship or staying put arrangements, are offered the same high level of support and opportunity.

Support continues into adulthood. Former foster children remain part of their foster families and continue to receive practical and emotional support from the agency. For example, if a young person did not access the agency-funded driving lessons while in care, they can still benefit from this support as an adult. The agency also provides financial assistance, such as rent deposits, and access to therapeutic services, ensuring that young adults are not left unsupported.

Children make excellent progress across all areas of their development. Their health needs are prioritised and consistently met. Foster carers who care for children with complex health needs work in close partnership with health professionals to ensure high-quality care. Children access education that is well matched to their needs, and foster carers are strong advocates, challenging appropriately when provision falls

short. Many children remain with their foster families beyond the age of 18 and are supported to continue their education into adulthood.

Children enjoy a wide range of enriching experiences with their foster families. The agency enhances these opportunities by organising seasonal events, school holiday activities and an annual two-night residential trip, all of which are open to every child in a fostering household. The agency also funds individual interests, such as theatre group memberships or participation in specialist school trips. Children are supported to develop independence skills appropriate to their age and understanding. A foster child and a staff member have co-produced a bespoke booklet to help older children prepare for independent living. Foster carers and staff take great pride in celebrating the personal achievements of all children and young adults.

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

Foster carers and staff demonstrate excellent knowledge of the potential risks faced by children and follow well-established procedures to keep them safe. Safer care plans and risk assessments are thorough, regularly reviewed and tailored to each child's individual needs. Foster carers and staff provide informed and sensitive support to children who may engage in high-risk behaviours, such as going missing from their foster home. Multi-agency working, reflective supervision, targeted training and direct work with therapists ensure that carers and staff have the skills and resilience to reduce risk-taking behaviours while promoting age-appropriate independence.

The agency has policies in place to guide staff and foster carers when children become involved with drugs or weapons. However, these policies do not clearly outline the specific actions to be taken if a child is found in possession of an illegal substance or weapon. Managers have acknowledged this shortfall and are currently reviewing both policies to strengthen guidance and ensure clarity.

Children benefit from positive and trusting relationships with their supervising social workers. These workers visit and speak with all children in the fostering household, including the second foster carer, and provide regular supervision. In addition, a non-case-holding supervising social worker conducts two unannounced visits to each foster family annually. These procedures ensure that the agency maintains a clear and comprehensive overview of each fostering household and that all children have access to additional trusted adults with whom they can share any concerns.

Managers and staff respond to complaints, significant incidents and safeguarding concerns in a timely and effective manner. There is strong partnership working with external agencies and robust systems in place to track the progress of complaints, incidents and referrals. Where appropriate, the responsible individual and registered manager commission external audits to review complaints, challenge external

agency practice and advocate on behalf of children and foster carers to ensure safe and timely outcomes.

The rights of children and foster carers are actively promoted. All children have access to independent advocacy services, and foster carers are affiliated with specialist support organisations. Foster carers are well supported during allegations or investigations. The agency has, for example, funded alternative accommodation for carers during investigations and provided access to psychotherapy sessions following the conclusion of enquiries.

The registered manager ensures that all complaints, incidents and safeguarding concerns are subject to thorough auditing and review. Investigations and post-allegation reviews are detailed and are presented to the panel and agency decision-maker, as well as shared with the local authority designated officer. These reviews examine decision-making processes and identify areas for learning and development. Where actions are identified, they are implemented promptly, and learning is shared with staff and foster carers to improve future practice.

The agency offers a wide range of internal resources to support staff, foster carers and children. This includes input from support workers who deliver time-limited, focused one-to-one sessions with children. These interventions help children develop new skills and build confidence. The agency also commissions specialist external services, including therapy, bereavement counselling and couples counselling. These services enable staff and foster carers to reflect on their practice, deepen their understanding of children's experiences and strengthen their emotional resilience and well-being.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is highly experienced and consistently child focused. She works closely with the leadership team, whose skilful management during a period of change has ensured that the agency continues to deliver outstanding care and outcomes for children.

Leaders, managers and staff are actively involved in the quality assurance and continuous review of the service. They have a clear understanding of the agency's strengths and areas for development and are fully engaged in the actions being taken to drive improvement. Foster carers and children are also regularly consulted through committees and meetings, which inform the agency's development and strategic direction.

Development plans are ambitious and are driving progress at both regional and national levels. Therapeutic models of practice continue to underpin the work of staff and foster carers. The leadership team recently commissioned a psychotherapist to review the agency's therapeutic model. The findings have informed the introduction of a five-year trauma-informed roadmap, which is now being implemented.

Leaders and managers provide high-quality development opportunities and support to both staff and foster carers. All foster carers complete the Training, Support and Development Standards within their first year of approval. All staff have undertaken trauma-informed training as part of the first year of the new roadmap. By the end of the current year, all panel members and trustees will also have completed this training.

Staff and foster carers benefit from a wide range of reflective support mechanisms. These include regular supervision, annual appraisals, and both individual and group therapeutic sessions led by a psychotherapist. Staff feel valued by their managers and speak positively about team days, well-being sessions, flexible working arrangements and the progression opportunities available to them. Foster carers appreciate being active members of agency life, including participation in committees such as the events committee and support groups, including the recently established and well-received men's group.

A key strength of the agency is its ability to recruit and support long-term, resilient foster families who provide children with permanence and stability. Leaders and managers continue to invest in and refine recruitment processes. A newly appointed staff member is leading on the development of innovative recruitment and marketing strategies. Enquiries are responded to promptly, and home visits, led by managers, include the whole prospective fostering household.

Assessments of prospective foster families are thorough and research-informed. Face-to-face Skills to Foster training and comprehensive assessments provide panel members with a holistic understanding of applicants' strengths and vulnerabilities. This enables the panel and agency decision-maker to make well-informed recommendations and decisions.

The panel chair is a highly experienced professional who, along with panel members, contributes to the agency's development at both regional and national levels. Established quality assurance processes and regular meetings between panel members and the senior leadership team support continuous improvement. For example, all panel members now receive a debrief from the panel chair following each meeting. Foster carers speak highly of the panel's sensitivity and passion. Many look forward to returning to panel every five years. One couple described how, during their recent review, panel members acknowledged and celebrated their 15 years of fostering, which they found deeply affirming.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that all staff and foster carers have access to policies and procedures that give them clear guidance informing them what to do if they find a child in possession of an illegal drug or weapon. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.3)

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: SC034804

Registered provider: The Children's Family Trust

Registered provider address: Hanbury Court, Harris Business Park, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 4DJ

Responsible individual: Marina Mulholland

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Inspector

Dawn Bennett, Social Care Inspector

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