

Greater London Fostering

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20–22 Gipsy Hill, London SE19 1NL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency offers a range of placements, including emergency, short-term, long-term and respite care for children, as well as parent and child placements. It also provides support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors and sibling groups. Additionally, a number of young people continue living with their foster families beyond the age of 18 through 'staying put' arrangements.

The agency was registered with Ofsted in February 2004, and the manager was registered with Ofsted in December 2024.

At the time of the inspection, the agency had 108 fostering households, who were providing care for 143 children. A group of 10 children spoke with inspectors during the inspection, while several other children forwarded voice messages and videos to share their feedback.

Inspection dates: 21 to 25 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: 6 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make excellent progress from their starting points, with improvements becoming even more evident the longer they remain with their foster families. The fostering agency plays a pivotal role in this success by negotiating and maintaining highly stable and supportive placements. Its rigorous suitability processes ensure that children thrive physically, socially and emotionally.

Children have exceptionally positive experiences. Children consistently say that they believe that their progress and experiences would never have reached their current heights were it not for the agency. A child described their overall experience as being 'first rate'.

Local authority social workers, independent reviewing officers and commissioners share similar sentiments. Foster carers receive high praise from children's local authority staff in acknowledgement of how far children have progressed while in their care. Some parents acknowledge the difference the foster carers have made to their children's lives.

Children are empowered to shape the services that support them. They have a strong voice within the agency, with managers and staff actively encouraging their participation in service development and continuous improvement. Opportunities such as the youth council, scheduled meetings with senior leaders, and access to a dedicated child advocate provide multiple avenues for children to share their views and influence decisions.

Although children know how to raise complaints, they rarely feel the need to do so. Instead, they prefer to speak with trusted foster carers or staff members. When concerns are raised, children can do so in various ways, including online, ensuring accessibility and responsiveness.

Children have a strong voice within the agency, and both managers and staff actively encourage their participation in shaping and developing the service, as well as guiding its continual improvement. For example, children can take part in the agency's youth council. As part of their welcome pack, they receive the contact details of senior managers within the organisation, to whom they can reach out whenever they wish. The agency also hosts scheduled meetings when children can speak directly with the agency director and other senior staff.

The agency's educational consultant, who also serves as the children's advocate, works closely with schools and colleges to resolve issues and to ensure that children and foster carers understand entitlements and funding options. This proactive support leads to exceptional educational outcomes. For instance, one independent child who privately paid to resit key exams was reimbursed by the organisation, recognising their commitment to self-improvement. The consultant also encourages

creative use of pupil premium funding to support learning and personal interests. One foster carer, recognising her child's interest in midwifery, arranged a call with a practising midwife, helping the child explore future career aspirations.

Children's learning outcomes and general development are excellent. The vast majority of children are making excellent academic progress. Children are motivated to do well and achieve high. The work of the educational consultant ensures that key issues, such as school enrolment, attendance, the risk of exclusion, school pastoral care and the outcomes of personal educational planning meetings, are carefully monitored.

Children benefit immensely from the organisation's ethos that all children are supported to thrive and meet their full potential. This is well demonstrated throughout all levels of the agency. For example, each child has a SPARK goal. SPARK is an innovative initiative that encourages and motivates children to consider and strive to reach targets in areas that they identify. For one child, their SPARK goal is to become an international lorry driver. Staff and the foster carers are supporting the child to apply for a provisional driving license, prepare for their driving theory test and eventually to learn to drive. Every child receives a SPARK certificate, to encourage children to stay on track to meet their chosen targets. There are regular discussions between children and staff of the agency about how else the fostering service can support them to achieve their goals and promote their general attainment.

Children benefit from the agency's commitment to ensuring that children have varied and exciting experiences. Children enjoy a diverse range of social, educational and recreational opportunities. They have fun. Children are routinely included in family events, religious celebrations, and holidays that are often abroad. The fostering agency arranges group social events, celebrations and activities for entire families to participate in. In addition, the agency funds each year a caravan holiday away for all children and their families if they so wish. This is hugely popular. Many families take part, and children benefit hugely from the experience.

Children have good access to primary healthcare services and receive advice and support from specialist services, as is needed. Children with complex health and medical needs make significant improvement while living with their foster families.

Children's identity needs are well met. Foster carers and staff pay good attention to the impact of children's age, disability, cultural, religious and linguistic needs. Children receive support to positively explore their gender identity. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are cared for by foster carers who have good insight to these children's traumatic experiences. One child's pupil premium funding is used to recruit a Tagalog tutor, a specialist tutor to help with the child's understanding of their Filipino heritage.

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

Staff and foster carers ensure that the safety and well-being of children is central to everything they do. The fostering agency ensures that foster carers are aware of the vulnerabilities of the children that they care for.

Managers and senior managers review with staff all children's placements where the stability is assessed as being at risk of disruption. Effective plans are devised to support and promote placement success. Staff promptly share all safeguarding concerns and incidents with managers for guidance and advice. This means that managers have good awareness and oversight of all incidents where children are, for example, missing from care, subject to or suspected of child sexual exploitation or child criminal exploitation, substance misuse and offending behaviour. Social workers' supervision sessions always include discussions about children's safety and well-being.

Staff regularly meet with children during home visits to obtain their views of how they are doing. Staff complete, at a minimum, one, although typically more, unannounced home visits to each fostering household per year. This is to further monitor the safety of children.

Foster carers set clear and consistent boundaries for children, which promotes children's positive behaviour. Foster carers use effective strategies to help to manage children's sometimes complex behaviour and to promote appropriate behaviour.

Incidents of substance misuse, child sexual and criminal exploitation and self-harm do not regularly feature in children's placements. When these do occur, foster carers and staff take effective action to protect children. There is good communication between foster carers, staff, the police and local authority social workers, which helps to promote children's safety. When children are missing from care, foster carers take action that promotes children's safe return home.

The agency runs a very effective out of hours service and foster carers are able to contact their own supervising social worker directly for advice and support. Foster carers appreciate speaking with staff, who know them well, in times of difficulty. They describe how in such situations outside of core hours, senior managers are also available and willing to visit households in person to offer support.

The management of complaints and allegations against foster carers is robust, fair and has children's welfare at the centre of all investigations. Standard of care investigations are assigned to independent social workers, which promotes impartiality. Investigative reports are thorough and comprehensive, with appropriate recommendations and action plans. Managers ensure that any learning from incidents are shared with staff to promote improved safeguarding practice.

Managers and the fostering service's human resources team ensure that the safe vetting and recruitment of staff and panel members. This confirms that staff and others are suitable to work with children.

Staff and foster carers devise risk assessments and safe care plans to help promote children's safe care. However, in a few cases, risk assessments and safe care plans are a combined document, which makes it difficult to identify all known risks. Some of these records have not been updated to ensure that they continue to help inform safe care practices.

The assessment, preparation and supervision of foster carers are excellent and emphasises the protection of children. Although most foster carers have completed a good range of safeguarding training, there is a small group of foster carers that still need to complete some of their safeguarding training to help them in supporting children who may be at risk of harm.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The leadership of the fostering service is strong. A suitably experienced and qualified registered manager manages the service effectively and efficiently. The registered manager is supported by the responsible individual and director, who are visible and have considerable presence with stakeholders, including children. The management team are confident and inspirational for the continued development and improvement of the service and in supporting children to thrive and meet their full potential.

The registered manager and senior staff make use of very effective monitoring systems that review the quality of care provided to children. For example, the quality of care report is completed every quarter. Management teams across the organisation meet on a regular basis to continually review the fostering agency's functioning and decide what needs to happen to further develop the service. Action plans are devised that help drive improvement and promote successful, stable placements for children.

Children's progress is keenly tracked by managers, who review and pay special attention to placements where progress is not as expected. These are reviewed with managers, social workers and other staff with action plans developed to promote children's improved progress. Managers confidently demonstrate the positive impact the service is having on children's lives.

The fostering service is very well staffed with varying roles. These include social workers, recruitment and placement officers and specialist staff, such as the educational consultant/children's advocate and a team manager who takes the lead in liaising with local authorities to explore placement and pertinent wider issues. The staff team is stable, with many staff having worked for the service for several years. Some members of staff have left and then returned, and some former social worker students are now employees. Staff overwhelmingly comment on the 'family feel' of

the service and leaders' commitment to doing all they can to promote the well-being and positive welfare for all who work for the agency.

Positive staff well-being is another developing ethos that permeates at all levels of the fostering agency. Leaders are clear in their belief that in order to care for others well, one must be first well cared for. This has given rise to a focus on developing and practising professional empathy. Managers are taking part in the agency's first round of mind-set coaching. Leaders plan to make this available to other staff in the future. Managers supervise staff with this ethos in mind. Staff in turn are supporting foster carers in a manner that reflects professional empathy. A well-being mentor is available to meet with staff both individually and in group settings. Staff say that these sessions are highly beneficial and have a positive impact on the way they work with children and families. Staff also have access to a well-being budget to use as they choose, and they participate in agency well-being days.

Staff support and supervision are excellent. Staff receive regular and meaningful supervision sessions that meet their needs well. They participate in reflective team and peer group meetings to explore practice and service developments. Appraisals are conducted each year. Staff very much feel highly appreciated, well cared for and integral members of the organisation.

One member of staff said:

I would like to express how much I love my job and look forward to the rewards and challenges it brings me on a daily basis. My view of the agency is that it is an organisation that feels like a family (very important to me) and offers a positive culture where its goal is to strive to always provide high-quality care and support to the fostering families holistically, supporting all children to achieve their goals in a physically and emotionally safe environment. I value that the agency has the option of well-being days, which are key when working in such a trauma intensive environment.

Staff training opportunities are also excellent. Staff, foster carers and others, such as panel members, have access to the organisation's training hub, which offers an extensive range of subject matters in varying formats. Staff receive a generous individual training budget that they use for training that is of particular interest to them.

The assessment of prospective foster carers is of a high quality. These are comprehensive, analytical and highlight how applicants meet fostering competencies. The fostering panel promotes safe, secure placements and its operation is highly effective. The process is orderly and democratic, and its administration is very organised. The central list is diverse, and panel members have the required experience and expertise in their chosen fields.

Foster carers receive regular and meaningful supervision. Supervision is of a high quality, and has a consistent focus on children, their safety, achievements and placement issues. Supervisory home visits also explore pertinent issues for foster

carers and their own families. However, some records of supervisory visits are not consistently recorded on file as required. Foster carers' annual reviewing process is robust and provides excellent insight into the experiences of children and their foster families in the year prior. These are completed annually and can be more frequently if there are concerns.

Foster carers say that the level of support they receive is superb, 'second to none'. A foster carer said, 'From the very beginning, the agency has provided us with outstanding support. Every member of the team has been approachable, knowledgeable, and genuinely invested in the well-being of both carers and children. The events they organise are always thoughtful and inclusive, helping to build a strong sense of community among foster families. Greater London Fostering has made a profound impact on our lives, and we are proud to be part of such a compassionate and professional organisation.'

The fostering service works very effectively with other professionals. There is close partnership working with children's social workers and communication is frequent. This collaborative way of working is enhanced by the work of a team manager who takes the lead on liaising with all local authorities who are working with the agency. This ensures that placements are appropriately negotiated and remain in children's best interests.

Children thrive with their foster families and make significant progress from their starting points. Children are safe, have some exceptional experiences, feel loved and love their families back. Children benefit from the aspirations of the fostering agency's leadership and the efforts of staff and foster carers, which have a meaningful impact on children's lives.

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 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. (Regulation 11 (a)) In particular, that risk assessments and safe care plans are explicit in highlighting risks posed to children and others and include strategies in place to help reduce risks.	30 September 2025
The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. (Regulation 17 (1)). In particular, that foster carers promptly complete relevant safeguarding training especially when specific safeguarding risks are posed to children they are caring for.	30 September 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers' files include records of supervisory meetings. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 21.8)

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: SC035327

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Responsible individual: Melanie Yearwood

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Inspector

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Inspector
Richard Wyper, Social Care Inspector

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