

NFA South East

The National Fostering Agency Ltd

Basepoint Business And Innovation Centre, Metcalf Way, Crawley, West Sussex RH11 7XX

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The National Fostering Agency is a privately owned independent fostering agency that operates nationally. This inspection relates to the work carried out by the south east region.

This agency registered in 2003. The agency provides a wide range of fostering placements, including emergency, short-term, long-term, bridging and parent and child placements. Included in its range of fostering services are also the placement of unaccompanied children seeking asylum and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. At the time of this inspection, the agency provided care for 57 children in 45 fostering households.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2025.

Inspection dates: 9 to 13 February 2026

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: 5 December 2022

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 receive good quality care from committed carers who know them well. There is a strong emphasis on long-term stability and permanence for children. The care they receive helps children to feel secure, develop a sense of belonging and make progress.

Carers understand and implement a child-centred, therapeutic approach to parenting and responding to children's behaviour which is in line with the company's ethos. Staff and managers support carers effectively to ensure that they continue to provide attuned care to children.

Children are encouraged and supported to engage and achieve in education. Carers and staff work closely with education colleagues to negotiate barriers. Additional specialist education support is available within the agency if needed and supports positive outcomes for children with complex educational needs.

Staff actively seek and consider children's views. Staff and carers support children to take part in meetings about them and to express their wishes and feelings about important issues for them, such as family time. Staff conduct regular My Youth Voice surveys with children and the feedback from these is evaluated and followed up by managers. This helps children to feel heard and have a sense of agency.

Carers and staff are proactive in seeking specialist support and assessments for children if needed, including in relation to their emotional well-being. The agency communicates effectively with placing authorities about how such needs are met. Enhanced packages of support reduce delays for children and aid placement stability.

There is a strong focus within the agency on planning for children's futures. Staff promote timely discussions about 'staying put' which are led by children's needs and wishes. Foster carers talk with great pride about the young adults they support and the progress they have made.

Children's moves into foster homes are well planned and supported. Staff communicate well with placing authorities to obtain information to inform matching decisions and guide carers. They share information with children in accessible ways to help them understand their foster home and entitlements. There is a particular strength within the agency in understanding and meeting the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and matching them with skilled, experienced carers.

Foster carers support children to enjoy a range of positive experiences and pursue their interests, such as singing, drama, and gymnastics. The agency promotes the maintenance of memory boxes and photographs from the outset to help children record their achievements and add to their life stories.

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

Safeguarding concerns are generally managed well. Leaders, managers, staff, and foster carers know and understand children's individual risks and needs and take appropriate action when required. Carers receive timely and helpful responses from the agency in relation to safeguarding concerns, including through out of hours support.

Carers understand their responsibilities should children go missing from home. They follow children's plans and are proactive in seeking to find them. There is timely management oversight of such incidents and liaison with other relevant professionals to review safety plans for children.

On one occasion foster carers did not alert the agency and other safeguarding professionals immediately when a significant concern arose. The agency responded to this appropriately and it resulted in a standards of care investigation. This was a thorough investigation which identified learning and reflection for the carers and the agency.

The agency responds effectively when allegations are made about carers. Managers work collaboratively with placing social workers and the local authority designated officer to guide safety planning and investigations. Where required concerns are addressed through standards of care investigations, and carers returned to panel for review of their approval status.

Children benefit from clear and consistent boundaries. Carers are trained and supported to manage children's behaviour positively and to approach behaviour that challenges with empathy. Physical interventions are rare and are subject to appropriate oversight and review to aid reflection and learning for carers and children.

The agency is managing an ongoing and complex safeguarding issue in relation to a fostering family. Children's risk assessments in relation to this were not as clear as they could be. This is because the identified risks were not reflective of risk in relation to all children in the home and updates to assessments did not fully capture the outcome of investigations. This reflects the need for all staff involved to receive more robust support and guidance to ensure risks are fully understood and safely managed. Managers began to take action to address these matters during the inspection.

There are delays with the disclosure and barring service checks, beyond the agency control. For one foster carer and some adults in other foster carer households or networks. The agency is actively addressing delays and risk assessments are in place for all adults concerned. However, for 2 of the adults the safety plan has not been regularly reviewed and is not addressed adequately in the carer's safer care plan. There is no evidence that this has impacted on children but there is a risk of a lack of clarity between staff and carers about current circumstances and expectations.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The service is led by a registered manager and team manager. Managers are experienced and knowledgeable about fostering and the needs of looked after children. They are aspirational for children and invested in their progress. This is reflected across the agency, for example in the way staff and carers talk about children and their achievements.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the agency, the progress of children and the areas for development. Progress has been made to address the majority of shortfalls from the last inspection with ongoing development identified in some areas, such as the use of language in records and reports.

Staff in the agency work effectively with a range of professionals involved in children's lives and understand the complex networks that often surround children. Leaders manage differences of opinion constructively and maintain good working relationships. Feedback from professionals about care, communication and safeguarding is positive. One professional said, 'I know [the child] is in good hands.'

Carers feel well supported by the agency. They describe staff and managers as being available, responsive, and actively involved in planning for children. For instance, staff consistently attend meetings alongside carers. Carers receive regular, supervision that addresses children's needs and their own well-being. Staff constructively challenge carers when needed to consider different approaches and perspectives.

Staff feel well supported by managers and colleagues. Team morale and relationships between staff are positive. Team dynamics, communication, and reflection are aided by regular team meetings as well as reflective sessions with clinical input and practice workshops around relevant issues. This underpins a supportive culture within the agency.

There is a suitable range of mandatory training for staff and carers and a variety of additional training that staff and carers can access in relation to the specific needs of children. Managers monitor staff and carer compliance with training effectively and regular discussion in supervision helps to consider training needs and address any delays. As a result, carers and staff are well informed to support children.

Staff receive good quality supervision and appraisal, wherein there is focus on safeguarding, reflection, and development. Appraisals and probationary reviews are completed within required timescales but some staff, including the registered manager, have not received supervision at the frequency outlined in company policy. As such there are missed opportunities to bolster support and strengthen oversight.

The fostering panel and agency decision maker provide suitable quality assurance and independent scrutiny of assessments and reviews of carers. Panel processes and decision making are timely. Changes to the panel system over the last year brought



some benefits such as broadening the membership of the central list. However, care experienced people are not consistently represented on panels. Managers have plans to improve this, but it is too early to see the impact of these.

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, 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, and (Regulation 11 (1)(a)) In particular, ensure that risk assessments thoroughly consider risks to all children in fostering households, that safer care plans and risks assessments are reviewed regularly and that staff involved in managing complex safeguarding matters have access to suitable support.	13 April 2026
The fostering service provider must ensure that the fostering panel has sufficient members, and that individual members have between them the experience and expertise necessary, to effectively discharge the functions of the panel. (Regulation 23 (7)) In particular, ensure that the fostering panel consistently includes a care experienced person.	13 May 2026

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that all staff, including the registered manager, are provided with regular supervision. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 24.4)



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: SC035553

Registered provider: The National Fostering Agency Ltd

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual:

Registered manager: Jacqueline Miller

Telephone number: 01895 200 300

Email address: adminse@nfa.co.uk

Inspectors

Jacob Robson, Social Care Inspector

Kelly Marchmont, Social Care Regulatory Inspection Manager



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026