

Action For Children Fostering

Action For Children

Action for Children Roundhay Suite, Regus Tower Court, Oakdale Road, York, North Yorkshire YO30 4XL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Action for Children Fostering is an independent fostering agency based in York. The agency assesses and supports foster carers to provide long-term and short-term foster placements. At the time of the inspection, the agency was providing a family placement service to 32 children and young people with 24 fostering families.

Inspection dates: 17 to 21 March 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 17 January 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

The agency provides an effective fostering service. Children live with foster carers who know them well and receive high quality individualised care. Children experience increased stability in their lives. This is because the agency's matching process is effective. Most children are settled and have lived with their foster carers for several years. Some foster carers are open to prolonging children's stability through staying put arrangements. This provides children with additional security that they require into their adulthood. As a result, children develop positive and trusting relationships with foster carers and become part of the wider family.

Children's learning outcomes are positive. Their school attendance and educational attainment are good with some going on to university. This is a strength of the agency.

Foster Carers ensure that children attend health appointments, and receive specialist help when needed. Children benefit from activities that are suited to their individual needs and interests. For example, some children have part-time jobs, and join local groups, such as football clubs and dancing groups. Children meet up for events organised by the agency. These opportunities help children build confidence and self-esteem.

In the main, feedback from foster carers is positive, saying they feel supported and valued the agency. Some carers describe the agency as 'amazing', 'caring' and 'a problem solver when there is a crisis'.

Children who live with foster carers with a different language, culture or religion, have their specific needs met. The foster carers embrace these differences and work hard to understand the children's needs. However, the current pool of foster carers is not ethnically diverse. This may reduce the agency's options available to them in the future.

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

Children are protected and kept safe from harm by those who care for them. Foster carers know how to keep children safe and are familiar with the signs that may suggest children are not happy. Children have good relationships with their foster carers and are able to go to them for advice and support.

Detailed risk assessments and safer care plans help foster carers understand the steps that they need to take to keep children safe. These are regularly updated and help to identify known and potential risks and vulnerabilities to children's safety. This ensures that children are better protected from harm.

When concerns for children's safety arise, multi-agency professional meetings take place to address concerns and agree appropriate actions. The majority of children do not go missing from home. Local multi-agency protocols and individual safeguarding plans are consistently followed when children do go missing from home. Leaders and managers have good oversight of safeguarding incidents and keep track so that there is no drift.

Foster carers and agency staff receive regular training on safeguarding and child protection. The agency ensures that foster carers understand their responsibilities in keeping children safe. Foster carers benefit from the therapeutic support from Changing Minds which is a psychological service working on relationships and improving well-being. Foster carers say that the one-to-one sessions with the therapeutic practitioner has helped them to understand and respond to children's behaviour.

The assessment, preparation and supervision of foster carers is effective. This supports foster carers' safe care of children. The agency's social workers carry out regular supervision visits to foster carers. During these visits, children are able to talk to the supervising social worker in confidence, if they wish to do so.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have an ambitious vision for, and high expectations of, the quality of care that the agency provides to children. The registered manager is committed to the organisation. Staff and foster carers are positively engaged and compliment the commitment of the management team to providing good quality care to children.

The staff are happy in their work. Supervising social workers benefit from regular reflective supervision, team meetings and training which equips them with the knowledge and skills needed to excel in their roles. Staff say that the managers offer clear direction and have a responsive approach. There is increased stability and cohesiveness across the service, which has helped staff to feel settled.

Foster carers are skilled in meeting children's identified needs. Good levels of training and supervision provide opportunities for foster carers to reflect on their roles and improve the care offered to children.

Leaders and managers have systems in place to monitor the quality of care provided. Children's progress is continually tracked and monitored. The storage of information is appropriate, and the quality of recording is strong. This helps to capture the day-to-day running of the service.

The fostering panel is established and effective. The panel chair is knowledgeable and as a panel, they scrutinise all information presented to provide effective and robust recommendations. Likewise, the agency decision-maker is also effective in their role.

Professionals spoke highly of the agency and the foster carers. Feedback from commissioners was positive about the quality of care children receive. Good partnership working ensures that the best outcomes for children are achieved.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should implement an effective strategy to ensure sufficient foster carers are responsive to current and predicted future demands on the service. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 13.1)

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: SC036242

Registered provider: Action For Children

Registered provider address: 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Colette Ferns

Registered manager: Paul Goodwin

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Inspectors

Evelyn Chafota, Social Care Inspector
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