

Foster Care Associates South East

Foster Care Associates Limited

Office 46, 100 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LB

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency registered with Ofsted in 2004. The manager registered in April 2018.

The agency provides short-term and long-term care placements for children, including those who may need to live with their brothers and sisters.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had 86 approved foster families, caring for 109 children.

The inspectors spoke with some of the foster carers and children during this inspection.

Inspection dates: 8 to 12 June 2026

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: 26 June 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Summary of findings

Children receive good-quality care from committed foster carers. Effective matching, stable relationships and tailored support help children make good progress and achieve positive outcomes.

Children are safeguarded and feel safe. Leaders, managers and foster carers work effectively with partner agencies to promote children's safety. However, improvements are needed to ensure that risks to children are consistently recognised, assessed and overseen.

Leaders and managers provide stable and effective leadership. Staff, foster carers and professionals value the support they receive. However, not all foster carers receive training to help them respond effectively to children's behaviour and emotional distress.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive good-quality care from foster carers who are committed to meeting their individual needs and helping them to make positive progress. Children enjoy stable and nurturing relationships with carers who understand their experiences and vulnerabilities. Foster carers work effectively with families and professionals to ensure that children get the support they need to thrive.

Children's identities are promoted. One child who had many questions about their family history benefited from direct work undertaken over a series of sessions, with local authority oversight. This ensured that complex family information was shared in a timely and age-appropriate way. Effective life-story work has helped the child develop a stronger sense of identity and self-worth.

Children with complex needs or disabilities are carefully matched with foster carers who have the skills, experience and commitment required to meet their needs. One child with physical disabilities and learning needs is cared for by experienced foster carers whose home has been appropriately adapted. The child benefits from a range of positive experiences, attends a specialist school and has been well supported when undergoing medical procedures. Strong partnership working with other professionals has ensured access to appropriate resources, including respite funding, enabling carers to continue to provide stable and effective care.

Children maintain important relationships with their brothers and sisters or other family members through regular family-time arrangements. One child said that the initial challenge of moving away from their family has been helped by how lovely their foster carers are.

Children make good progress from their starting points. They are supported to develop independence skills, access activities and enjoy a range of experiences that contribute to their personal development and wellbeing. Most children consistently attend school or college, and they have ambitions to achieve their careers of choice. The stability provided by foster carers has meant that some children remain in their care well into adulthood.

There are effective arrangements to seek and respond to children's views. Children are encouraged to express their wishes and feelings through conversations with the agency's social workers, participation activities and surveys. Feedback from children is overwhelmingly positive. Children say that they are happy, feel safe and value the care they receive from their foster carers.

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

Children say that they are safe living with their foster carers. They benefit from a culture where safeguarding concerns are responded to appropriately and information is shared with safeguarding partners.

Leaders and managers demonstrate a commitment to learning from incidents through management reviews, reflective discussions with staff and sharing of learning across the agency. These processes contribute to promoting children's safety and reducing the likelihood of similar incidents recurring.

Leaders have invested in additional safeguarding capacity through the safeguarding and transformation lead role. This person provides consultation, training workshops and auditing activity to strengthen safeguarding practice and support the agency's social workers and managers in responding to complex concerns. The role has increased the agency's focus on children who may be at greater risk of harm and has enhanced professional discussion around safeguarding matters.

However, this practice is not consistently strong. Auditing and management oversight do not consistently identify weaknesses in records, risk assessments, safety planning or decision-making for children at increased risk of harm. In one example, a risk assessment did not sufficiently identify escalating risks or the actions needed to reduce them. As a result, managers cannot be assured that safeguarding risks are consistently recognised and responded to effectively. There is no evidence that children have been harmed because of these shortfalls. However, a requirement has been made to strengthen management oversight and quality-assurance arrangements.

Leaders and managers have identified some of these weaknesses and have begun to act. They recognise that a more focused and systematic approach is required, including targeted auditing, improved oversight of children at greatest risk and stronger integration of multi-agency safety planning in the agency's records and risk assessments. These actions are meant to ensure that children get timely protection when concerns arise.

Leaders and managers have developed positive relationships with safeguarding partners. Discussions with external agencies indicate that information is shared appropriately when concerns arise. Additionally, managers ensure that allegations and safeguarding matters are notified to the regulator in line with requirements. There have been no concerns raised by the local authority designated officer about the agency.

There are appropriate staff recruitment and vetting procedures, including obtaining overseas checks where relevant. This helps to ensure that adults working with children are suitable to do so.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The agency benefits from stable leadership, with senior managers having been in post for many years. This provides continuity for staff, foster carers and children, and it supports the ongoing development of the agency.

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the agency's strengths and challenges. They are reflective and open about areas requiring improvement and have implemented strategies to address these. In particular, leaders have focused on improving staff retention, strengthening management oversight and enhancing their approach to monitoring risk.

Staff speak positively about working for the agency and describe a supportive and child-centred culture. Staff report that they receive regular training, supervision and guidance that help them carry out their roles effectively. The agency's social workers describe their workloads as manageable, enabling them to maintain regular contact with foster carers and children. Staff feel valued by leaders and appreciate the clear communication provided by managers. They consistently report that children remain at the centre of decision-making and that leaders promote an inclusive ethos, focused on achieving positive outcomes for children.

Foster carers are well supported by staff and value the relationships they have with the agency's social workers and managers. Foster carers report getting good-quality training, regular supervision and opportunities to access peer support through meetings and support groups. They speak positively about the support available when caring for children with complex needs. However, not all foster carers receive training to help them understand and respond effectively to children's behaviour. This limits managers' assurance that carers have the skills and strategies needed to support children through periods of distress and reduce the likelihood of physical intervention.

Foster carers also highlight the positive progress children in their care make. Inspectors saw examples of leaders and managers recognising and celebrating the contribution of long-serving foster carers, which helps foster carers to feel valued. However, some foster carers said that they are not always supported effectively to take breaks from their caring responsibilities. Managers are already aware of this and are looking at effective solutions.

Leaders and managers actively seek and respond to the views of foster carers and children. The foster carer representative described positive and longstanding relationships with leaders and managers and highlighted the importance placed on ensuring that both carers' and children's voices influence the development of the agency. This ensures that everyone feels listened to and able to influence change.

External professionals are positive about the quality of care provided to the children. Local authority commissioners describe constructive and effective working relationships with managers and value their responsiveness when children require to be placed with a foster carer at short notice. Commissioners particularly praised the matching process, which ensures that children live with foster carers who can meet their needs effectively. They also recognised the agency's strong retention of experienced foster carers.

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 provider and the registered manager must, having regard to— the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children placed by the fostering agency, carry on or manage the fostering agency (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill. (Regulation 8 (1)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff have a good understanding of risks to children and that there is effective guidance to help foster carers keep children safe.	31 July 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all foster carers receive training in positive care and control of children, including training to help them understand and respond effectively to children's behaviour. In line with the agency's policy to use physical interventions when necessary to prevent harm, foster carers should receive appropriate training to help them do this safely and prevent injuries to them or children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 3.8)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers are provided with breaks from caring as appropriate. These are planned to take account of the needs of any children placed. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 21.5)

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: SC039271

Registered provider: Foster Care Associates Limited

Registered provider address: Malvern View, Saxon Business Park, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 4AD

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Inspectors

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Richard Wyper, Social Care Inspector
Angela Reid, Social Care Inspector

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