

Action for Children Fostering Wessex

Action for Children

Round House, Newgate Lane, Fareham, Hampshire PO14 1JD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency is operated by a large national charity. This branch provides fostering placements for children with various complex needs. The service provides therapeutic parenting and attachment-based foster care.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had 8 approved fostering households. There were 9 children in placement.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2019.

Inspection dates: 11 to 15 May 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
---	--------------------

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
---	-------------

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: 9 October 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Summary of findings

Children make sustained progress in stable, nurturing foster homes where they feel safe, valued and heard. Foster carers understand children's needs and provide warm, consistent care that promotes resilience, achievement and a sense of belonging. Safeguarding practice is effective, with timely responses to concerns, strong partnership working and a culture of learning. Leadership is highly effective, with a committed manager, strong strategic oversight and excellent governance. Staff feel supported, appropriately trained and motivated, contributing to consistently high-quality care and exceptional outcomes for children.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are making significant and sustained progress in their foster placements. They benefit from relationships with carers that are firmly rooted in security, trust and emotional warmth, enabling them to thrive. As a result, children develop strong attachments, feel valued and speak positively about their experiences, often describing their foster carers as 'kind' and 'caring' and saying that they provide love and comfort.

Children's progress is strengthened by the agency's approach, which is evident in creative problem-solving, therapeutic thinking and targeted interventions that directly enhance children's lived experiences. This has contributed to excellent outcomes, including some children remaining with their foster carers for several years and some children successfully returning to live with their family.

Education is prioritised, with carers and supervising social workers advocating effectively to secure appropriate provision. Even when children attend part time, the level of support ensures that their needs remain central and their progress is monitored closely. Children's academic, social and personal achievements are celebrated, helping them build confidence and develop friendships beyond the fostering household.

Older children have successfully secured a place at college or university. Helping children learn new and age-appropriate skills to support their independence is a strength. One child described how their foster carer really goes 'above and beyond' and how they are 'super grateful for everything she does'.

All members of the fostering household are recognised as important and included. Birth children are actively involved in activities and celebrations, and their views are routinely sought through a range of methods to ensure that they have a meaningful voice in decisions about children joining or remaining in their home.

Children's cultural, identity and heritage needs are well understood and respected. Matching is thoughtful, and the agency is broadening the diversity and faith representation of its foster carers. Children's voices are consistently heard and acted on, and they are encouraged to express their wishes, feelings and identity with confidence. One child said about her foster carer, 'She never fails to make me feel cared for, and I really don't know where I would be without her.'

All children are consistently represented and supported by agency staff or foster carers to engage in their care planning and meetings. The agency's determined advocacy and effective communication with local authorities and partner agencies strengthen its commitment to long-term stability. This directly supports children's exceptional progress and positive life experiences. One professional described how a child 'knows they are cared about now'. Overall, children feel that they matter.

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

Children are safe and feel safe. They build strong, trusting relationships with their foster carers, creating an environment where they can speak openly, honestly and with confidence.

Carers and staff do not avoid risk. Instead, they encourage children to take age-appropriate risks and to learn from their experiences and explore the world safely. This approach helps children develop resilience and confidence in their abilities.

Allegations about foster carers are handled swiftly, effectively and with clear oversight from managers and senior leaders. Foster carers report feeling heard, included and treated with fairness, describing the process as 'open and non-judgemental'. Recording is detailed, and learning from investigations is shared across the organisation, ensuring that improvements are consistently embedded in practice.

Risk assessments contain relevant information that enables carers to provide appropriate supervision and support. Improvements to these show the agency's willingness to reflect, adapt and further strengthen safeguarding practice. In addition, highly effective, collaborative safety plans with child-centred interventions increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.

Overall, foster carers are skilled in de-escalating situations that could place children or others at risk. Their responses are calm, thoughtful and well balanced. This reflects the strong partnership working with the agency to ensure that children remain protected, supported and emotionally secure. However, foster carers are not consistently receiving the support described in the agency's statement of purpose, which sometimes reduces their capacity to respond safely and therapeutically when children show aggressive behaviour. As a result, carers may struggle to interpret how children's past trauma influences their actions.

Training for carers is well documented and consistently attended. Additional learning needs identified through annual reviews, placement endings and investigations are incorporated into ongoing development. When a specific development need is identified, the agency proactively seeks bespoke training to support the delivery of high-quality, informed care.

Foster carers say they receive excellent support from supervising social workers who are experienced, a stable presence and committed to children's safety and wellbeing. Staff training is prioritised and embedded in daily practice. This reflects the agency's strong safeguarding ethos.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leadership in the agency is exceptionally strong. The registered manager is a committed and determined leader who, alongside a small but well-established and knowledgeable team, works tirelessly to secure positive outcomes for children. Together, they form a cohesive and influential driving force in children's care planning and across the organisation.

Strong leadership promotes a culture where learning is embraced. Staff benefit from research-informed meetings, collaborative learning opportunities and clinical input, which enrich practice. This includes attending national conferences, accessing bespoke training and benefiting from consultations with the clinical psychologist to support their practice.

Staff report feeling well supported, highly valued and motivated. They are enthusiastic about their roles and committed to the children and foster carers they work with. Regular, practice-focused supervision contributes to a culture of continuous development. Investment in staff training, professional learning and growth is a notable strength, with staff incorporating new knowledge into practice.

The registered manager is proactively working with the agency's marketing and recruitment team to expand the pool of respite foster carers. This will help to reduce the risk of compassion fatigue and ensure that carers can access planned breaks, promoting consistency for children during these times.

The responsible individual demonstrates a clear understanding of the service and its strengths, as well as the needs of children and staff. Strategic oversight through meetings, audits and supervision sessions is purposeful and ensures that the agency remains compliant while promoting children's wellbeing and progress.

Governance arrangements are excellent. Monitoring systems are highly effective and responsive to emerging themes and needs. Quality assurance activity, including data analysis and triangulation through purposeful management meetings, provides clear stability and direction across the agency. As a result, organisational oversight remains proactive and consistently effective.

The fostering panel is appropriately skilled and has an experienced, independent chair who has quickly established focus and rigour. Decision-making by the agency decision maker is clear, timely and well informed. This promotes effective scrutiny and challenge, ensuring that decisions remain centred on children's welfare.

The agency consistently strives for more than 'good enough'. The commitment to ensuring that children receive the highest standard of care is exemplary, echoed by foster carers who describe the agency as 'going above and beyond'.

The requirement under regulation 17 raised at the last inspection has been met.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers receive support in understanding how to manage their responses and feelings arising from caring for children, particularly where children display very challenging behaviour, and acknowledge how children's previous experiences can manifest in challenging behaviour. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 3.7)

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: SC039572

Registered provider: Action for Children

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

Responsible individual: Colette Ferns

Registered manager: James Heane

Telephone number: 01923 361521

Inspector

Jill Sephton-Wright, Social Care Inspector

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 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