

Fostering Support Group: London Office

Fostering Support Group Limited

4th Floor, Parkview, 82 Oxford Road, Uxbridge, UB8 1UX.

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

First established in 1989, Fostering Support Group provides fostering services in the Kent and Greater London area.

The agency provides emergency, short- and long-term foster placements for children of all ages who have a range of care needs. The agency also provides parent and child placements.

There are currently 43 fostering households with 61 foster carers. There are a total of 50 children and young people in placement.

The manager of the agency registered with Ofsted in September 2017.

Inspectors were aware during this inspection that the appropriate authorities were investigating two serious child protection allegations. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the service in response to the allegations were considered alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Inspection dates: 16 to 20 June 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	requires improvement to be 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: 13 June 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 fostering service provides good-quality care to children. Outcomes for children are positive, and children have good experiences living with their foster carers. Many children are in long-term placements and have developed secure attachments with their foster families and a strong sense of belonging. Children say that they love living with their foster parents and many stay with their foster carers once they turn 18 under 'staying put' arrangements.

Children make good progress from their individual starting points in all areas of their lives. They feel part of the fostering families they live with and, in some cases, the foster families' extended family. Any risk of disruption is identified early, and support is provided to foster carers by the agency's support worker and in-house therapist. The support offered to foster carers helps to provide stability for children and for children to feel valued and welcomed in their foster carers' homes.

Children maintain relationships with their families. In some cases, their brothers and sisters, while not fostered with the agency, are able to take part in activities organised by the foster carers. Many children are placed with their siblings to ensure that children can stay together and help to develop relationships and their identity.

Children live healthy lifestyles. Foster carers and staff ensure that there is good promotion of the children's physical, emotional and social well-being. Foster carers and the agency provide good emotional support for children. Children readily approach their foster carers for reassurance and emotional warmth. Foster carers are supported by the in-house therapists to understand children's behaviour and emotional well-being and have completed appropriate training, including 'therapeutic thinking'.

Children have good access to primary healthcare services and receive advice and support from specialist services as required. Foster carers are strong advocates for children and secure funding from placing authorities for some children to access private health assessments due to long delays from local services. This ensures that children's health needs are assessed and understood without delay to enable them to get the support and care that they need.

Children's learning outcomes and general development are good. They make good academic and vocational progress. School and college attendance is high, and children make steady progress from their starting points. The agency has recruited a support worker who specifically supports children who are out of education through mentoring and engaging in educational activities. Foster carers challenge education provisions when children are not provided with appropriate support, including school exclusions.

Foster carers provide a range of opportunities for children to practise their skills for independence. They also support children to have new experiences, such as going

on holiday abroad and trying new activities in the local area. Children are helped to choose activities they want to do, and foster carers support their interests.

Foster carers are extremely positive about working for this agency. They feel valued and appreciated, which motivates them to meet the high standards and ethos of the agency. Foster carers say that their social workers are amazing and are always present during crisis, including out of hours, and know children very well. Foster carers demonstrate a good understanding of the needs of children placed with them and feel very much part of the team around the child.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Generally, the agency has good procedures in place, and there are no significant concerns regarding safeguarding. However, although not widespread, some shortfalls were identified on this inspection.

One foster carer did not demonstrate appropriate understanding of safeguarding procedures. Despite the foster carer being experienced and receiving appropriate support and training, they did not take effective action when there was a concern about a child. On one occasion, the foster carer failed to inform the agency and the placing authority about the concerns raised by the child's health professionals. In addition, the foster carer failed to share relevant information with the health professionals about the child in her care. This delayed professionals from sharing information and compromised timely intervention from the local authority. The agency has responded positively to this shortfall, working with external agencies and providing refresher training for all the foster carers about reporting and sharing information when concerns are raised about children.

Leaders and managers respond to allegations promptly. They ensure that they communicate with safeguarding partners, such as the local authority designated officer and the police, regularly. However, a recent standard of care report completed by an independent person was not of good quality and the investigator did not consult with the relevant professionals, including placing authorities. The shortfalls in standards of care reports could lead to unsuitable people caring for children. Leaders and managers acknowledge this shortfall and have met the independent investigator to address the concerns raised about the quality of the report.

Supervising social workers assist foster carers in understanding children's behaviour and attachment-related issues. They also implement behaviour support plans and collaborate with the in-house therapist and external professionals to help foster carers support children in regulating their emotions. During home visits, supervising social workers engage in direct work with children, discussing important topics such as healthy relationships and online safety. However, one respite foster carer did not receive appropriate support, including regular visits and monitoring when children were in her care. The agency has reviewed the protocols for respite carers and updated the supervising social worker's handbook to ensure that staff are clear about their roles in respect of respite carers.

Staff and foster carers receive regular training in safeguarding. Training also includes safer caring, child sexual exploitation, modern slavery and child criminal exploitation. Children's risks are assessed and documented well. Risk assessments are reviewed in line with emerging needs to help foster carers respond to children's risks and vulnerabilities.

Children spoken to said they feel safe and can talk to their foster carers about any concerns. They know how to make a complaint, and they have access to a detailed children's guide, which has a list of people they can contact if they are worried. The children's guide is tailored to meet children's diverse needs, including those with additional communication and learning needs. The newly recruited support worker helps children to understand their rights and express their views, which the agency responds well to.

Children see their foster carers as adults they can trust. The positive relationships that children enjoy with their carers means that they can talk to them about any worries they have. These relationships enable honest conversations to take place with children about safety, including healthy relationships that they may not share with other people in their lives.

Placement matching is a real strength. The agency's placements team is very committed to making sure children are placed with carers who can meet their needs. The referral process is now managed jointly with another agency within the provider group. The new team is tenacious in obtaining as much information as they can from the local authority and sharing this with foster carers, thereby providing them with good insight into children's needs. Managers hold daily referral meetings to discuss referrals and also review any foster placement that may be at risk of breaking down. Feedback from local authority placements teams is positive about the agency's child-focused ethos.

Most of the children currently placed with the agency's foster carers do not go missing from their foster homes. If risks are identified, these are managed well. When children do go missing from their placement, foster carers work well with the relevant agencies to ensure that there is a well-coordinated response. Foster carers show appropriate understanding of children's individual missing-from-home protocols and understand the risks when children are missing. Foster carers ensure that children receive independent return home interviews to gather important information to help to manage and reduce risk.

Staff, foster carers and panel members are recruited safely, in line with statutory requirements, to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The responsible individual and the registered manager are experienced and suitably qualified. They are very child-focused and determined to achieve the best possible outcomes for children. They both know the children and the foster carers

exceptionally well, which enables them to identify and provide the support that they need.

Staff are extremely positive about working for the fostering agency and feel very well supported. They describe the leadership team as 'approachable', 'visible' and 'available', as well as being responsive to individual and diverse needs of the children and foster carers. Communication is good between staff and managers, helped by regular team meetings and staff supervision to reflect on children and foster carers and how to progress any situations of concern. Staff benefit from reflective supervision and training by the in-house therapist to help understand children's needs.

There have been significant improvements since the last inspection, and the requirement and recommendations have been met. Monitoring arrangements are strong and include regular and thorough reporting and feedback from foster carers and children. Areas for improvement and development are identified, with strategies to achieve these. Foster carers say that they are listened to and that they can approach the leadership team at any time and have been supported during the changes merging with the new provider. The agency is a learning organisation and is very reflective about how to improve when things have not gone as well as they should have, following complaints, incidents and unplanned endings.

Staff are exceptionally child focused and committed, going above and beyond to support the children and foster carers. Foster carers and children's social workers speak highly of them. External professionals are positive about the agency's child-focused approach and report good communication with the team. Supervising social workers attend all relevant meetings and appropriately challenge placing authorities to ensure that children get the best possible service.

Foster carers are extremely positive about working for this agency. They feel valued and appreciated, and this motivates them to meet the high standards and ethos of the agency. Their comments include 'communication with staff is brilliant', 'all staff know the children very well' and 'staff available any time and has a family feeling'. Many foster carers have recommended their friends or family members to foster for the agency. Supervision between foster carers and social workers are of good quality and records are detailed.

Foster carers' annual reviews are thorough, timely and carried out by independent social workers. This provides an additional layer of independence and scrutiny.

The fostering panel is effective. The panel offers a broad range of experience. The panel chair and the vice-chair bring a wealth of relevant experience and provide feedback on the quality of the reports presented to panel. The agency decision-maker is very experienced, understands the agency's strengths and vulnerabilities and makes timely and well-considered decisions.

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 (1)(a)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that all carers have appropriate understanding of the safeguarding policies and procedures, and report safeguarding incidents promptly. Information must be shared with the relevant agencies. Leaders and managers must ensure that respite foster carers are supported and trained appropriately, and visits completed are completed in line with the regulations.	30 August 2025

Recommendation

- The registered provider should ensure that all reports completed following standard of care investigation are of appropriate quality and consults with stakeholders during the process. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 22.8)

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: SC388487

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Inspectors

Dorothy Thompstone, Social Care Inspector

Jo Tarbie, Social Care Inspector

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