

Foster Care Solutions

8 Lumley Court, Drum Industrial Estate, Chester Lee Street, County Durham DH2 1AN

Registered provider: Foster Care Solutions Limited

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Foster Care Solutions is an independent fostering agency based in County Durham. It registered with Ofsted in July 2010 and the manager registered with Ofsted in April 2020. It is part of the Futures for Children group, whose head office is in Maidstone, Kent.

Foster Care Solutions provides placements on an emergency, respite, short-term and long-term basis, including parent and child placements. At the time of the monitoring visit, the agency had 26 fostering households providing care for 31 children and young people.

Inspection date: 31 March 2026

Date of previous inspection: 14 October 2024

This monitoring visit

The purpose of this visit was to seek assurances from the agency regarding its response to safeguarding notifications previously submitted to Ofsted.

During the visit, inspectors spoke with the registered manager and sampled records. No serious or widespread concerns were identified.

The manager and supervising social workers work effectively with other safeguarding professionals to share concerns about children. This joint approach supports decision-making and helps decide whether children can safely remain with their current carers. When needed, action is taken to move children to alternative carers, ensuring that their safety and welfare is maintained. On one occasion, a

delay from a carer reporting an incident resulted in a delayed response from the agency and safeguarding partners. This has been addressed with the carer through training and support to prevent this happening again. The agency has out-of-hours support, and carers have been reminded of how and when to use it.

Allegations are taken seriously and managed through safeguarding procedures. Carers are well supported through the allegation process and can access counselling if needed. This provides valuable emotional and practical support during challenging periods and promotes their wellbeing. The manager seeks advice from safeguarding professionals and responds appropriately to concerns. However, the manager did not record informal discussions with staff, which left an unclear decision-making trail.

The manager creates meaningful opportunities for reflection and learning. This has improved the agency's ability to learn from safeguarding incidents and improve practice. A more thorough approach has been introduced for carers who have rescue pets, with specialist behavioural assessments to be arranged in future, ensuring children's safety when there are pets in the home.

Carers receive safeguarding training within agreed timescales, helping them to meet fostering standards. Their understanding of roles and responsibilities is supported through regular supervision sessions, conversations and visits.

Supervising social workers complete both planned and unannounced visits to ensure that children are safe, settled and well cared for. The frequency of visits reflects the needs of children and carers.

Carer reviews provide a balanced reflection of carers' strengths and areas of challenge, including feedback from a range of professionals. This allows the agency to maintain good oversight of the ongoing suitability of carers. Reviews are presented to the agency decision-maker in a timely manner, supporting comprehensive decision-making.

The requirement and recommendations issued at the last inspection were not reviewed as part of this visit and have been restated. One new recommendation from this visit has been raised.

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

Statutory requirement

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person must comply with 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 before making any decision affecting a child placed or to be placed with a foster parent due consideration is given. (Regulation 11 (a)(b)) In particular, the registered person must consider National Minimum Standards 11.2, 15.1 and 15.2.	30 June 2026

Recommendations

- The registered provider should ensure that each foster carer is aware of all the necessary information available to the fostering service about a child's circumstances, including any significant recent events, to help the foster carer understand and predict the child's needs and behaviours and support the child within their household. The fostering service follows up with the responsible authority where all such necessary information has not been provided by the authority. In particular, to develop an effective escalation policy referring to the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 when contacting the placing authority and if necessary escalate the matter to the Director of Children's Services. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 3.9)
- The registered provider should ensure that a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a particular member of the fostering household, or staff member, including details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a record of any action taken and the decisions reached, is kept on the person's confidential file. In particular, the manager should record informal discussions that help with decision making. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 22.7).

- The registered provider should ensure that the management of the service ensures that all staff's work and all fostering activity is consistent with the 2011 Regulations and NMS and with the service's policies and procedures ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.3)
- The registered provider should ensure that staff, volunteers, panel members and fostering households understand the nature of records maintained and follow the service's policy. There is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.2)
- The registered provider should ensure that records, entries, decisions and reasons for them, are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising, distinguish between fact, opinion and third-party information and are signed and dated. Information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. Children are actively encouraged to read their files, other than necessarily confidential or third-party information, and to correct errors and add personal statements. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.5 and 26.6)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the independent fostering agency since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC413428

Registered provider: Foster Care Solutions Limited

Registered provider address: Futures for Children, The Masters House, College Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6YQ

Responsible individual: Nicholas Barnsby

Inspectors

Miriam Dolman, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Cat Makel, Social Care Inspector

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