

Sunbeam Fostering Agency

Sunbeam Fostering Agency Limited

383 Broad Lane, Coventry CV5 7AX

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency is one of three individually registered independent fostering agencies operated by this organisation. The agency was registered with Ofsted on 28 March 2011.

The agency offers emergency, short-term, respite, long-term and parent and child placements. The agency is specifically able to meet the needs of unaccompanied children from outside the UK.

At the time of this inspection, there were 81 fostering households caring for 114 children.

Inspection dates: 24 to 28 November 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 7 November 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

Children are cared for by foster carers who understand their individual needs and provide warm, nurturing care. Foster carers are committed to the children and create homes that provide a sense of belonging. Children spoke positively about their care and described their foster carers as family, using terms such as 'auntie' and 'uncle'.

All children attend education that meets their needs. When children are not in education, foster carers work closely with professionals to prevent them from falling behind. Children make good progress, with many achieving GCSEs and moving on to further education. Their achievements are celebrated by foster carers and the agency.

The agency has appointed a youth ambassador to support children in expressing their wishes and feelings, both individually and in groups. Children spoke positively about this support.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities with their foster carers and through the agency, including horse riding, gym sessions, hockey lessons and trips to theme parks. A football team, developed by a supervising social worker, provides regular opportunities for children to come together and play. During the inspection, one child proudly shared their memory photobooks of time spent with foster carers. Agency events include foster families, promoting a sense of belonging and togetherness.

Children are welcomed into foster homes and receive a children's guide on arrival. These guides are bright, engaging and age-appropriate, helping children prepare for their move into foster care.

The agency provides care for a significant number of separated children. The agency's diverse range of foster carers enables many children to live with carers who share their cultural background. Most children who do not speak English are supported effectively to understand decisions about their care. However, on a few occasions children are used to relay information to other children. For example, one child was informed about a planned stay with respite carers by another child, and a foster carer reported using a care leaver to relay information to a child. These practices are not appropriate and compromise the privacy of children's information.'

Children's health needs are usually met well by foster carers, and they are supported to attend routine and specialist health appointments. However, the agency does not ensure that carers always receive the outcome reports for children's annual health assessments. This limits the ability of managers to monitor and track children's progress against recommendations in these reports effectively.

Foster carers support children to develop independence skills. Most children benefit from carers who actively teach them essential life skills. The agency provides post-18 consultations to plan support for young people and their carers. However, managers

did not challenge one child's local authority when plans to move the child on to independence were rushed and not done collaboratively. This undermined this child's experience of moving on. However, the child remains in touch with his foster family which is important.

Foster carers' records of children's experiences are inconsistent and for some children they do not capture the child's journey. This may limit children's ability to make sense later in life of their lived experiences. The agency is aware of inconsistencies in recording practice and supervising social workers are taking steps to address this with foster carers and help them to make improvements.

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

Children feel safe living with their foster carers. They have built positive relationships and identify carers as individuals they can trust. Children also spoke positively about supervising social workers, describing them as professionals they can talk to.

Children's risks and vulnerabilities are understood by those caring for them. Foster carers and staff at the agency work collaboratively with other agencies to support children. As a result, children are able to enjoy age-appropriate freedoms and independence while being well supported to keep safe. While children's risk assessments and safer caring plans are not consistently updated, this is a recording issue and has not had a direct impact on children's safety to date.

Social workers routinely carry out unannounced visits to foster carers' homes. During these visits, they spend time with children and foster carers, helping to ensure that the standard of care remains high.

Children rarely go missing from foster homes. When they do, the agency acts quickly to keep them safe. Welfare visits and return-home interviews are completed when children return, helping the agency understand why the child went missing and take steps to prevent it happening again.

Allegations within the agency are rare. When they do occur, the agency acts swiftly to ensure children's safety. This includes making referrals to relevant professionals and routinely returning foster carers to panel to reassess their suitability. However, incidents have sometimes been considered in isolation, with limited professional curiosity about patterns and trends. In addition, the agency has not always ensured that actions recommended by the panel are completed in a timely manner.

Incidents of self-harm are rare. When they do occur, the agency implements safety plans to reduce risk. However, for one child who had sustained an injury, the agreed safety plan and notification protocol was not followed. This resulted in a delay in the agency being able to assure themselves of the child's safety. Once aware of the incident the agency took action to update the safety plan.

The agency employs an in-house therapist who provides one to one support to foster carers, helping them to meet children's emotional and behavioural needs. This

promotes a trauma informed approach and ensures that care is tailored to children's individual needs.

On two occasions foster carers called the police to help them to support children experiencing difficulties at the foster home. On one of these occasions there was a lack of reflection and follow up work with the foster carers to help understand more about what had happened for the foster carers and for the child.

The agency follows safer recruitment practices for foster carers, staff and panel members. This ensures foster homes are safe and that only suitable adults work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is suitably experienced and qualified. She is dedicated to the agency, her team, children and carers. She is child focused and committed to ensuring that children receive continuity of care and meaningful experiences. She is supported by an operations manager who shares her values and ethos.

The agency benefits from a strong and stable staff team. Supervising social workers report feeling well supported by managers, who are consistently available and accessible. Staff value the dedicated space and opportunities provided to share practice and discuss current topics, which they then share with their foster carers.

Panels are quorate and include a diverse mix of experience, backgrounds and professions. Decisions are timely, clear and well documented, with no unnecessary deferrals. The panel chair is suitably qualified and experienced, demonstrating a strong understanding of panel processes and functions. This is enhanced by the agency's decision-maker, who is also qualified and experienced. Together, they ensure that decisions are well informed and made promptly.

Foster carers provided overwhelmingly positive feedback about the support they receive from the agency. One foster carer said, 'The agency has gone above and beyond with support.' Another carer stated, 'Our supervising social worker is amazing.'

The agency has strong working relationships with external professionals. Children's social workers provided consistently positive feedback about the quality of communication with the agency and the standard of care provided to children.

Systems to monitor compliance and quality are largely effective and overall managers retain some good oversight. However, some issues have been seen in isolation. This is a missed opportunity for managers to seek a broader overview to identify and address potential patterns and trends to proactively support foster carers and service development.

The registered manager has taken steps to improve practice in the agency. This includes safeguarding workshops and practice-based training to strengthen staff knowledge and skills. The agency has also reviewed its approach to recording children's daily lives and has provided training to social workers on child-friendly recording. Senior managers have acknowledged that this learning is not yet fully embedded and having an impact for all children.

Foster carers receive regular supervision. However, the quality of supervision varies. Supervising social workers do not consistently challenge carers when practice requires development. Actions are often repeated and not followed through. In some cases, supervision records are repetitive and lack reflection. These issues have not been identified by team managers.

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 size of the fostering agency, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by the fostering agency, and 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)(a)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that all aspects of the monitoring service are effective and actions taken as necessary when shortfalls are identified. This includes, challenging a child's placing authority when needed in respect of care planning and outstanding documentation, reviewing and updating records as needed such as risk assessments and safer care plans and making sure these are implemented consistently, reviewing information collectively to better identify patterns and trends and consider and act on panel recommendations in a timely way consistently.	30 June 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers receive supervision. Supervisions should have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and offer support and a framework to assess the carer's performance and develop their competencies and skills. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 21.8)
- The registered person should ensure that 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. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.6)

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: SC425236

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