

New Life Fostering Agency

Charter House, 848 Tyburn Road, Birmingham B24 9NT

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

A private company operates this fostering agency. The agency registered with Ofsted in May 2012.

The fostering service provides short-term, long-term, emergency and parent and child foster homes. It also provides foster carers who support brothers and sisters to remain together.

At the time of this inspection, the fostering agency had 41 approved fostering households providing care for 58 children.

The registered manager resigned and left the agency on 30 November 2024. A new manager has been appointed, subject to safer recruitment processes being completed.

Inspection date: 3 December 2024

Date of previous inspection: 8 July 2024

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit took place after Ofsted received information of concern in schedule 7 notifications relating to safeguarding incidents. Additional information provided to Ofsted raised concerns about management systems in the agency. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to review the effectiveness of arrangements to ensure the safety and welfare of children.

Leaders ensure that allegations and concerns raised against foster carers are well managed. They ensure that action is taken to protect children, in line with the agency's safeguarding policies. Internal investigations are completed and when required, foster carers have been taken to panel. These initial actions reassure children and promote their safety and well-being. However, managers do not always

carry out a learning review to consider ways in which the agency could develop and improve practice when needed.

Overall, systems in place to safeguard children who go missing from home and are at risk of exploitation are good. Staff and leaders attend regular multi-agency meetings and share all information with the relevant professionals. They ensure that all actions and safeguarding strategies recommended are used to reduce children's risks. However, leaders do not consistently ensure that children receive return home interviews, to explore the reasons for the child going missing and what happened while they were away from their foster home.

Since the previous inspection, the registered manager has left the agency. A new manager has been appointed but has not yet started. Two managers have left in as many years, in difficult circumstances. A full review of the senior management team's effectiveness is yet to take place to understand why this has happened and mitigate against this happening again. However, some steps have been taken to strengthen the leadership team, with the appointment of an operations manager, and there are also plans to appoint a team manager.

When children move in with their foster carers, the needs and wishes of the children already living in the foster home are not always well considered. In addition, on at least two occasions, the terms of foster carers' approval have been changed by the agency decision-maker within the carers' first year of fostering, without being considered by the agency's fostering panel.

Overall, the agency's fostering panel is strong, and panel members make clear recommendations to the agency. Managers do not always ensure that these recommendations are kept under review and acted on when appropriate. In addition, at least four fostering households have not completed their training, support and development standards (TSDS) within 12 months. These issues highlight shortfalls in the effectiveness of management monitoring and oversight to support carers' development.

One requirement and two recommendations made at the last full inspection were not reviewed at this visit and will be considered at the next full inspection.

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 fostering service provider must not— employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so, or allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person IS fit to do so. For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person— is of integrity and good character, is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform, and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b) (3)(a)(c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that safer recruitment processes are in place for the verification of references for supervising social workers. This requirement was raised at the previous inspection. It was not considered as part of this inspection and will be carried forward to the next inspection.	7 January 2025
The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. (Regulation 17 (1)) In particular, the registered provider must ensure that foster carers have access to training that enables them to meet children's complex needs. In addition, the agency must ensure that foster carers are adequately supported and	31 March 2025

enabled to complete their TSDS within 12 months of approval. This requirement was raised at the previous inspection and is repeated.	
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 (a)) In particular, the registered provider must ensure that the needs of children moving in with foster carers are carefully considered alongside those of any other children already living in the household. In addition, ensure that managers liaise with a child's placing authority as needed so that children have the opportunity to talk someone on their return from being missing from home about why they went missing and what happened while they were away. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is repeated.	7 January 2025
The fostering service provider must review the approval of each foster parent in accordance with this regulation. A fostering review must take place not more than a year after approval, and thereafter whenever the fostering service provider considers it necessary, but at intervals of not more than a year. The fostering service provider must on the occasion of the first review under this regulation, and may on any subsequent review, refer their report to the fostering panel for consideration. (Regulation 28 (1) (2) (5)) In particular, the registered provider must ensure that foster carers are referred to panel when seeking a change of approval in their first year. This will allow for due consideration of the reasons and suitability of any changes.	7 January 2025
The registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to—	31 March 2025

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, ensure that monitoring of the service is effective, managers consider and act on recommendations raised by the fostering panel and they undertake learning reviews when needed to support the development of carers and the agency.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that checks are carried out in line with regulation 26 and foster carers understand why identity checks, relationship status and health checks, personal references and enquiries are undertaken about them and why enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are made on them and adult members of their household. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', page 28, paragraph 13.5)
- The registered person should ensure that the fostering service has a record of the recruitment and suitability checks which have been carried out for foster carers when the person has lived outside the UK and further checks as are considered appropriate when a DBS certificate is not sufficient to establish suitability to work with children. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', page 38, paragraph 19.3)

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: SC447166

Registered provider: New Life Fostering Agency Limited

Registered provider address: Charter House, 848 Tyburn Road, Birmingham B24 9NT

Responsible individual: Gary Pickles

Inspectors

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector

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