

New Life Fostering Agency

New Life Fostering Agency Limited

Charter House, 848 Tyburn Road, Birmingham B24 9NT

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 56 children.

There has been no registered manager since January 2025. A new manager did start in December 2024. However, they left the agency in June 2025. A new manager has been identified to start in post, subject to safer recruitment processes being completed.

Inspection dates: 28 July to 1 August 2025

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and/or the care and experiences of children and young people are poor, and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 8 July 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Since the last inspection, the agency has experienced several changes in management arrangements. Inconsistencies in the oversight of the operation of the agency have significantly impacted on children's care, safety and experiences. These shortfalls have contributed to an overall judgement of inadequate.

Care planning for children is weak and lacks effective management oversight. Managers do not consistently evaluate children's individual needs and vulnerabilities prior to them moving into their foster carer's homes. For example, a child moved in with foster carers without managerial knowledge or any evidence of preparation. Care planning decisions do not always consider if carers have the skills and experience to meet children's needs. For example, a child with speech delay moved in with carers whose first language was not English. As a result of poor care planning, some children have moved prematurely, increasing their anxiety and disrupting their stability.

Some children have left their foster homes in unhappy circumstances. This has included children having their belongings packed in bin liners. This practice does not help children to feel valued. Although the responsible individual has taken steps to address this, when children leave their foster carer homes earlier than planned, managers do not consistently reflect on the circumstances or identify learning to improve future practice. This limits the agency's ability to support children effectively when they move into or on from their foster homes.

Children's health needs are still not always prioritised by managers and staff. Children with specific health needs do not always receive support in keeping with their needs. Managers were not aware of two children's complex health conditions, including a significant delay in one child receiving essential medication. In addition, foster carers had not received necessary guidance or support to meet these health needs. This does not promote children's well-being.

Overall, children are receiving education that meets their needs. The agency's support workers work in partnership with foster carers and educational professionals to ensure that children receive the right support. Children who are not in education have plans in place to ensure that they receive support.

Since the last inspection, the agency has taken steps to increase children's participation. Support workers engage with children to ensure that activities reflect their interests. Children enjoy attending sports days, movie nights and indoor play areas. Inspectors saw children enjoying an arts and crafts activity.

Most children have been living with their foster carers for several years. Children say that they are happy living with their foster carers and have formed positive

relationships with them. Furthermore, young people can choose to remain living with their foster carer into adulthood under staying put arrangements.

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

Safeguarding arrangements are poor. Leaders and managers have not ensured that foster carers fully understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe. This has led to unsafe practice, including adults unknown to the agency sleeping on the floor of a foster home and two older foster children sharing a bed to make space for a carer's family member to sleep overnight. These incidents have placed children at potential risk of harm and demonstrate a lack of robust safeguarding oversight.

Managers and staff do not consistently provide foster carers with clear advice, guidance and support, to keep children safe. Risk management measures do not always consider the wider context surrounding children's risks and vulnerabilities. For example, a foster carer permitted a child to stay overnight at the home of an unknown adult. No checks were completed. The lack of oversight, support and guidance has impacted the ability of foster carers to respond effectively to safeguarding concerns and to ensure children's safety.

The agency's response to children who go missing from home is inconsistent. For example, on one occasion, foster carers failed to demonstrate professional curiosity regarding a child's well-being. The child was missing from their foster home for four days without the foster carer reporting the child as missing to any professionals. The agency only became aware when the child failed to attend school. A safety plan was subsequently implemented, but staff failed to effectively communicate this to the foster carers, limiting the impact of the plan.

Supervising social workers complete annual health and safety checks of foster carer homes to ensure that children live in a safe environment. However, managers failed to ensure that safety modifications to a foster carers home were officially signed off as safe. As a result, a child moved into a foster carers home when it was unsafe. During the inspection, the responsible individual reassured inspectors that additional works to the accommodation had been completed and signed off as safe.

When serious complaints are made about foster carers, managers do not always share this with Ofsted in a timely way. This reduces the regulator's understanding of the action managers are taking to ensure the safety of children.

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The agency has experienced an unsettled period over the past twelve months due to significant changes to the management arrangements. These changes have had a direct impact on the overall functioning of the agency. As a result, there have been

occasions where the continuity and quality of care provided to children has been affected, leading to concerns regarding their safety and overall well-being.

Since the last inspection, two managers and the responsible individual have left the agency. This is the agency's second manager within a twelve-month period. A new responsible individual is now in place, and a new manager has been recruited, subject to the completion of safer recruitment checks.

Monitoring systems are not effective in supporting leaders and managers to maintain robust oversight of the agency and foster carers practice. As a result, leaders and managers have failed to consistently identify and address poor practice. The members of the current management team have taken steps to improve practice and have introduced new monitoring systems, such as monthly monitoring and case file audits. However, these systems are in their infancy and not yet fully embedded in practice. Consequently, improvements within the agency remain limited.

The agency has not consistently ensured that the foster carers approvals are in line with the number of children in their care. On at least one occasion, a foster carer's term of approval was changed by the agency decision-maker within their first year of approval without being taken back to the fostering panel. In addition, foster carers were caring for four children without the correct exemption process being followed. As a result, children were living in unregulated foster homes.

While most foster carers have completed the agency's mandatory training, some refresher training is out of date. Furthermore, the agency has not consistently provided carers with training tailored to help foster carers meet the specific needs of the children in their care. This does not equip foster carers with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet children's individual needs.

The agency's fostering panel is generally strong. Panel members provide clear and considered recommendations to the agency. However, managers do not consistently ensure that panel recommendations are reviewed or acted on promptly or in an appropriate manner. This limits the panel's influence on improving practice and safeguarding outcomes.

A new agency decision-maker has recently been appointed who brings a wealth of experience. Although he has only been in post for a brief period, there is evidence of a positive change in decision-making practice. However, these changes are still in their initial stages and have yet to become fully embedded.

Leaders and managers have recruited a new staff team. Supervising social workers are suitably qualified and experienced to support foster carers. Staff speak positively about the leadership team and share a commitment to improving practice across the agency.

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 prepare and implement a written policy which— is intended to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect. The procedure under paragraph (1)(b) must, subject to paragraph (4), provide in particular for— consideration to be given to the measures which may be necessary to protect. (Regulation 12 (1)(a)(b) (3)(e)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that supervising social workers and foster carers understand their safeguarding role and responsibilities.	12 September 2025
*The fostering service provider must promote the health and development of children placed with foster parents. In particular the fostering service provider must ensure that each child— has access to such medical, dental, nursing, psychological and psychiatric advice, treatment and other services as the child may require, is provided with guidance, support and advice on health, personal care and health promotion issues appropriate to the child's needs and wishes. (Regulation 15 (1) (2)(a)(d)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that the children with specific health needs are provided with the right support and treatment.	2 November 2025

In addition, the registered provider should ensure that foster carers are provided with the right support and guidance to meet children's specific health needs.	
The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that— before making any decision affecting a child placed or to be placed with a foster parent due consideration is given to the child's— wishes and feelings (having regard to the child's age and understanding), and religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background. (Regulation 11 (b)(i)(ii)) This requirement is repeated.	12 September 2025
*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)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that the monitoring of the service is effective, that managers consider and act on recommendations raised by the fostering panel and that they undertake learning reviews when needed to support the development of carers and the agency. This requirement is repeated.	2 November 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)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that foster carers have access to training and support that enables them to meet children's needs.	2 November 2025

This requirement is repeated.	
The fostering service provider must review the approval of each foster parent in accordance with this regulation. A 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. (Regulation 28 (1) (2)) This requirement is repeated.	12 September 2025
If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 36(1)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that all schedule 7 notifications are reported to Ofsted.	12 September 2025

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers know and implement what the fostering service and the responsible authority's policy is in relation to children going missing. (Fostering Services: national minimum standards', page 15 paragraph 5.2)

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: SC447166

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Responsible individual: Jacalyn Wilsdon

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Inspectors

Lydia Isaac, Social Care Inspector
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