

St. Christopher's Fellowship

St Christopher's Fellowship

Kinder House, Lombard Street, West Bromwich B70 8SD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This agency is operated by a large charity. There is a permanent registered manager in post; they are suitably qualified and experienced.

The fostering agency provides emergency, respite, short-term, long-term and parent and child foster placements.

At the time of the inspection, the fostering service had 19 approved fostering households and 24 children placed with its foster carers

Inspection dates: 8 to 12 December 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	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: 12 September 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 valued by their foster carers, so they have a good experience and are making progress. Many children have lived with their foster carers for several years, providing them with a significant period of stability. For example, one child has progressed over time from being highly resistant to join in any activities or play, to being an active member of a dance group and playing in an orchestra. This is because of the quality and consistency of care they have received.

Children enjoy a range of events and activities with the agency. This includes trips to theme parks, girls groups, awards events and Christmas parties. One child told the inspector they really enjoyed the 'animal man' event, especially having a lizard sit on their head, there is a photo on the wall of the agency, proudly capturing this moment. Children's participation in the agency is promoted through creative ideas. For example, they have a travelling teddy bear and their adventures with children, foster carers and staff are reported in the newsletter. This has really gained children's interest and engagement. These opportunities provide children with enriching experiences.

There is a determined and proactive approach to promoting equality and diversity at the agency. For example, Black History Month was celebrated with a social event, children contributed to this. One child told the inspector they were proud to design and present a poster at this event. Staff explore and challenge any potential prejudice with foster carers, with the aim to educate and promote equality.

Children benefit from the practical and emotional support from the agencies skilled support worker. Their interventions are planned and purposeful. For example, helping children manage their emotions or enhance their life skills such as budgeting or applying for jobs. The support worker is creative and resourceful in their approaches. As a result, even children who are initially reluctant do engage and benefit from this support.

Children benefit from living with foster carers who are highly committed to their care. Leaders and managers make well considered decisions for children to be placed with their foster carers. They take children's needs and the foster carers skills and experience into account. As a result, there is a very low number of placement breakdowns, and many children have permanency arrangements with their foster carers. This includes for some children remaining as part of the family and household into adulthood.

Children enjoy nice experiences with their foster carers, for example holidays abroad. Foster carers are diligent in helping children improve their health and to attend and engage with their education. The agency is also proactive in supporting children's education. For example, for a child who is due to move on to independence they have secured a new computer to enable them to continue with their college course.

Foster carers are very well supported by the agency. Staff are very responsive, and one foster carer describes their supervising social worker as 'more than ten out of ten' and 'always one step ahead'. Foster carers have experienced changes in supervising social workers. However, this has been well managed through good communication from the manager and a detailed handover of information between staff.

Foster carers highly value the interest and consideration agency staff have in their birth children. They go above and beyond to get to know them, and they understand their importance in the fostering households. The manager inspired one birth child to become a social worker, and another now works at the agency.

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

Staff and carers have a good understanding of children's risks and vulnerabilities. Overall, children's plans reflect their current risks. Foster carers understand the measures in place and actions they must take to keep children safe. There have been no incidents of children going missing. However, this risk is considered in their plans, which provides foster carers with guidance of how to respond in this event.

The agency is proactive in sharing relevant information or concerns with partner agencies. They have excellent working relationships and communication channels with local authorities. As a result, the professional network around children swiftly respond to any emerging risks. For example, disruption to children's activities that may place them at risk of exploitation. Professionals highlight that communication from the agency is highly effective.

Children have trusted relationships with their foster carers. Children say that they would talk to their foster carers if they had any worries.

Foster carers receive therapeutic training that equips them well to help children manage their emotions. For example, one carer said that they have helped a child to develop strategies to manage their own emotions and behavioural responses. This has benefited the child vastly as they are now able to engage in learning at school, due to being significantly calmer and settled.

The 'wrap around' therapeutic service enhances support for carers. It provides them with one-to-one therapeutic reflective support sessions. This helps foster carers understand children's needs and behaviours more effectively. This service extends to providing support to the staff team at the agency, which promotes staff well-being and reflective practice.

The agency provides resources and information to foster carers to help them to keep children safe. For example, online safety resources have been shared prior to Christmas to help foster carers to set up new devices with the necessary safety measures and monitoring.

The physical environments where children live are monitored by the agency, are safe, and appropriate. All fostering homes have an annual health and safety assessment and an unannounced inspection at least once a year. For increased diligence and objectivity, these visits are usually conducted by a different supervising social worker.

There have been some occasions where foster carers have withheld important information about their lives, not sharing this in a timely way with the agency. While these matters have not resulted in any harm to a child, this lack of transparency could place children at risk. When any information of concern relating to foster carers is made known, agency staff take this very seriously and follow necessary procedures to address it.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The agency is led by an experienced and dedicated manager. The manager is very present and accessible for the foster carers. The manager visits children and foster carers and will occasionally join their supervisions, to get to know them and build relationships. Foster carers know they can contact the manager with any concerns or worries. There are clear arrangements for 'out of hours' support and foster carers know how to access this.

The frequency of foster carer supervision is excellent; this is enhanced as necessary such as when children first move in or when carers are newly approved. Communication from the agency is strong; foster carers are kept well informed. This is achieved through support groups, newsletters and frequent e-mail and phone correspondence.

There has been a lot of change in respect of the staff team. There is now a full staff team who bring a wealth of skills and range of experience. All staff are supervised monthly, covering well-being, development and case management. Staff have their performance closely assessed during their probation. Staff are very well supported, and their professional development is strongly encouraged. One staff said, 'The manager builds an environment where it is okay to ask questions, and it is okay to need support.' As a result, staff are progressing and thriving in their roles.

The fostering panel is well organised and operated. There are clear and dedicated roles, fulfilled by skilled and experienced practitioners. The new panel manager is developing plans to enhance panel members training. There is a structured approach and dedicated personnel that focus on recruitment, retention and matching. The agency ensures that there are sufficient resources to support these functions.

There have been a relatively low number of carer resignations and no de-registrations. The agency reviews the decisions and considers any learning points, from this situation to promote retention.

The required safer recruitment checks are undertaken for permanent staff. However, there is a shortfall in the recruitment checks for panel staff, the agency does not hold a copy of their photo identification or qualifications.

The agency did not inform the regulator that the responsible individual had left the organisation in a timely way. Furthermore, the regulator has not received an up-to-date statement of purpose for the agency and there were some gaps in the quality-of-care reports, although it is noted these have all been completed.

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 For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person 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) (3)(c)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that all of Schedule 1 information is available regarding all staff employed by the service.	30 March 2026
The registered person must give notice in writing to the Chief Inspector without delay if any of the following events takes place or is proposed to take place— where the registered provider is an organisation there is to be any change in the identity of the responsible individual (Regulation 39 ((1)(e)(iii)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that they keep the regulator updated of all relevant changes in a timely way.	30 March 2026

This also relates to the registered person ensuring that they always share the service's updated Statement of Purpose and Quality of Care reports with the regulator.	
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that all foster carers actively safeguard and promote the welfare of foster children. In particular, that all foster carers receive training that equips them with the understanding that they must share changes and important information about their household in a timely way with the fostering service. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 4.2)

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: SC458341

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Registered provider address: 1 Putney High Street, London SW15 1SZ

Responsible individual: Vacant

Registered manager: Barbara Webber

Telephone number: 01215253738

Email address: fostering@stchris.org.uk

Inspector

Alison Snell, Social Care Inspector

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