

Ideal Fostering

Ideal Fostering Limited

Anchor House, 4 Bridgeman Street, Walsall WS2 9NW

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency undertakes recruitment, assessment, approval and support of foster carers. The fostering agency provides emergency, long-term, short-term, respite and parent and child placements. At the time of this inspection, the fostering agency had 113 fostering households providing care for 181 children.

The agency has two registered managers. One is a director of the fostering agency. The second manager registered with Ofsted in February 2023.

Inspection dates: 16 to 20 June 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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

Date of last inspection: 15 May 2023

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 make good progress from their starting points because of the care that they receive. Children's feedback about their care is positive. Five children were spoken to during the inspection. One said they feel happy and well cared for, another said the younger children they live with are like siblings and he is like their big brother.

Children build positive relationships with carers they know well. Carers provide children with consistent care. Several children continue living with their carers into adulthood, on staying put arrangements. This highlights carers' commitment to the children they care for and demonstrates stability that helps children to make progress.

Carers plan a range of activities for children to enjoy, for example, trips to theme parks, the seaside and museums. In addition, many children take part in hobbies or attend clubs which help them to form friendships outside of their home and school. One child enjoys attending the local church and has taken on responsibilities which are helping to build their independence skills. Another child has a keen interest in sport and enjoys boxing and playing cricket. These activities help children develop a positive sense of self and contribute to building self-esteem.

Education is promoted well. Children have good school attendance and are achieving in education. All children of compulsory school age are attending school. A dedicated education support worker helps carers to manage any difficulties, and they are a good advocate for the children in multi-agency meetings, which helps children to receive the educational support that they need.

Independence skills are encouraged by carers, to support children to develop skills that help to prepare them for adulthood. They are encouraged to take on age-appropriate responsibilities such as keeping their bedroom tidy, doing their laundry or tidying their toys away. Older children are supported to learn to cook and how to budget to get the most out of their money.

Foster carers receive good-quality support from the agency. They benefit from regular, good-quality supervision from their supervising social worker as well as additional support as and when needed. Carers value this and feel confident that they will receive the support that they need, during working hours and from the out-of-hours service.

Children are welcomed into carers' homes and generally settle in well. They are provided with a welcome box containing age-appropriate items to help them adjust to their new home. On occasions when a children's needs can no longer be met, the agency takes appropriate steps to reduce the risk of breakdown through the provision of additional support. The agency works with placing authorities to try to maintain the placements until an alternative can be identified. On one occasion, a foster carer's decision to end a placement with immediate effect meant the child had

an abrupt ending to their placement, which would have been difficult for them to understand. Managers have recognised that this is not good practice and are taking steps to address the concerns.

There is a lack of evidence of how the agency makes thorough placement decisions. For example, there are no records of how the needs, wishes and feelings of other children living in the households are considered. On one occasion, a child had a respite stay with a carer who had not completed training specific to their needs, but this had not been identified.

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

Children know who to talk to if they are worried and they are provided with clear information from the agency about how to make a complaint. One child said they could talk to their carer, social worker or school if they have any concerns. There have been no complaints made by children.

Children are supported to manage their feelings and emotions. Specialist support staff are available to work with carers and children to manage difficult situations. For example, one child was supported to re-engage with school after a period of not wanting to attend and isolating themselves in their bedroom. Support from the therapeutic team enabled them to develop confidence and re-engage with friends, and this supported a return to education.

Carers receive good training and support to manage children's behaviour. One member of staff is trained to deliver behaviour management and safe hold training, and carers were very complimentary about the training they receive. There have been a low number of physical interventions given the size of the agency. When carers have needed to hold children, it has been proportionate to the risk presented.

There is good partnership working with the police and placing authorities when children are involved in criminal activity. One child is currently on bail and has been supported by their carers to adhere to the conditions so that there are no further consequences. Although the carers are committed to the child, they recognise that to keep them safe they need to move to a new area, and they are working with the placing authority to manage any risks until this can happen.

Individual allegations and concerns about foster carers are well managed. Children's safety is always the priority, and all relevant professionals are notified. Investigations take place and carers approval is reviewed to ensure they remain suitable to foster. There have been a high number of concerns raised, with most relating to carers using physical intervention. Despite individual concerns being managed appropriately, the agency would benefit from managers showing more curiosity about patterns and trends in concerns being raised. Deeper analysis would allow the agency to consider whether any improvements need to be made.

Staff are recruited safely. All appropriate checks are completed. The therapist and agency decision-maker undergo the same stringent checks as permanent staff. This

helps to ensure that only suitable people are involved in the care of vulnerable children.

Assessments of foster carers sometimes lack curiosity. In one assessment, a significant health and safety issue in the carer's home was identified but then not followed up. Information in the report was inconsistent, which led to the hazard being overlooked. The issue was not identified through the quality assurance or panel process, meaning that the carer went on to be approved and to care for a child for a short period, in a home that did not meet the required standard. The child did not come to any harm during their stay.

Risk is well managed by carers; however, risk assessments do not always reflect all potential hazards, particularly in more complex situations. For example, one carer was using a stair gate to restrict a child's movement around the home to keep them safe, but this was not reflected in the risk assessment. In another case, a child had been involved in several significant incidents and although these were added to the risk assessment, changes to the level of risk were not considered. Furthermore, plans related to parent and child placements only considered risks relevant to the child and not from the parent towards the child or foster carers. Plans were updated, but only after a significant incident had occurred.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The agency has two experienced registered managers, one of whom works part time. Although they work well together, their separate roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined. This has the potential to impact the consistency of oversight across the agency's operations.

The agency has a stable staff team. Many staff have worked for the agency for several years. Staff enjoy their work and feel supported by the management team. They work well together and there is a positive working environment.

The number of complaints is low and many compliments are received. When complaints are received, they are thoroughly investigated and a written response is made. Efforts are made to maintain positive working relationships after complaints are made, so that any shortfalls in practice do not impact on children's placements.

Staff are well trained. They complete a wide range of training to assist them in their roles and staff with specialist roles receive the appropriate training. For example, the responsible individual has completed training about their role and panel members have received appropriate training on the role of panel and the national minimum standards.

The agency has a diverse group of carers to meet a wide range of children's needs. The agency provides care for unaccompanied children seeking asylum and carers receive additional training before providing these placements. Some carers specialise in this type of placement and have a lot of experience, which they share with less

experienced carers. Carers have access to an interpreter when needed, which helps to ensure that children are thoroughly consulted and informed about important issues.

Carer training is good. There are a broad range of courses available both online and face to face and attendance is good. Foster carers said they really enjoy the training and find it interactive and engaging. This helps carers to keep their skills and knowledge up to date so that they can provide good care for children.

The effectiveness of monitoring systems is mixed. While managers use a range of tools to monitor documents and practice, they have failed to identify some repeated shortfalls. For example, when care planning documents are missing, there are attempts to chase them, but the agency is failing to escalate quickly enough. A number of missing documents have been outstanding for a long time without any escalation above the placing social worker. Furthermore, the actions taken do not correspond with the agency's own escalation process. In addition, monitoring has failed to identify several instances when work has been completed but not recorded on the agency's system, or that foster carer agreements do not include full information and have not been updated since carers were first approved. More thorough monitoring and oversight are needed to ensure that the agency is fulfilling its statutory obligations.

Panel arrangements are generally well managed. The agency has sufficient panel members with a wide range of experience, and all panels have been quorate. On one occasion, shortfalls in an assessment were not picked up by panel members or the agency decision-maker. In addition, carers have not always received a full assessment of their suitability to foster within the required timescales because the agency is not using the deferral process appropriately. One carer should have had their approval reviewed in November 2024 but has still not received a decision because the panel has been repeatedly deferred.

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 have monitoring systems in place and use them effectively to oversee the agency. This specifically relates to ensuring that missing documents are identified and escalated promptly. It also relates to ensuring that all work completed is recorded on the agency's systems. It also relates to ensuring that risk assessments fully consider the impact of any significant incidents. Furthermore, it relates to ensuring that quality assurance is completed to a good enough standard to identify shortfalls in assessments. It also relates to ensuring that systems are in place to update all foster carer agreements annually and identify if this has not been done. In addition, leaders and managers must ensure that both registered managers maintain full oversight of the agency and that effective alternative arrangements are in place if one manager is absent.	29 August 2025
The fostering service provider must review the approval of each foster parent in accordance with this regulation.	29 August 2025

A review must take place not more than a year after approval, and thereafter whenever the fostering service provider consider it necessary, but at intervals of not more than a year.

When undertaking a review, the fostering service provider must—

make such enquiries and obtain such information as they consider necessary in order to review whether the foster parent continues to be suitable to be a foster parent and the foster parent's household continues to be suitable

At the conclusion of the review, the fostering service provider must prepare a written report, setting out whether—

the foster parent continues to be suitable to be a foster parent and the foster parent's household continues to be suitable, and

the terms of the foster parent's approval continue to be appropriate.

If the fostering service provider decide, taking into account any recommendation made by the fostering panel, that the foster parent and the foster parent's household continue to be suitable and that the terms of the foster parent's approval continue to be appropriate, they must give written notice to the foster parent of their decision.

If, taking into account any recommendation made by the fostering panel, the fostering service provider are no longer satisfied that the foster parent or the foster parent's household continue to be suitable, or that the terms of the approval are appropriate, they must (subject to paragraph (8))—

give written notice to the foster parent that they propose to terminate, or (as the case may be) revise the terms of, the foster parent's approval (a "qualifying determination"), together with their reasons and a copy of any recommendation made by the fostering panel

Regulation 28(1) (2) (3)(a) (4)(a)(b) (6) (7)(a))

This specifically relates to the agency's use of the deferral process. Managers must ensure that all foster carers have a

full review of their suitability at a maximum interval of 12 months, and a decision on their continuing approval must be made.	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that, in parent and child placements, the placement plans and risk assessments clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of the foster carer and the parent in relation to the child. (The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services, page 13, paragraph 2.14) This recommendation is repeated.
- The registered person should ensure that the fostering service only suggests foster carers to local authorities as a potential match for a child if the foster carer can reasonably be expected to meet the child's assessed needs and the impact of the placement on existing household members has been considered. In particular, the registered person must ensure that the needs, wishes and feelings of all children living in the household are taken into account before a new placement is agreed and that carers' training is sufficient to provide good care for the child. (Fostering services, national minimum standards 2011, 15.1)
- The fostering service should have a written health and safety policy, which should be covered in the assessment and training of foster carers. Foster carers should be supported to ensure that their homes are free of avoidable hazards, in keeping with family life. In particular, the registered person must ensure that any significant health and safety issues are identified and actioned prior to a person being approved as a foster carer. It also relates to ensuring that appropriate risk assessments are in place when any equipment in the home restricts a child's liberty in order to safeguard them from harm. (The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011, page 27, paragraph 3.82)

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: SC472125

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Inspectors

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