

Team Fostering

Team Fostering

Unit 6, Hedley Court, Orion Business Park, North Shields, Tyne and Wear NE29 7ST

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Team Fostering is a not-for-profit independent fostering agency. It has two branches, one of which, Team Fostering North East, is the subject of this report. It was established in 2001 and operates from an office in North Tyneside, with further premises in Middlesbrough. The other, separately registered branch, is based in Sheffield.

The agency provides short-term, emergency, long-term and permanent fostering homes. It also offers placements for children with specific care needs, including unaccompanied children seeking sanctuary, parent and child placements, and placements for children with complex needs.

At the time of the inspection, the North East branch had 72 approved fostering households and 99 children placed with foster carers. The North East branch has 12 young people living with foster carers under 'staying put' arrangements. This is an arrangement that enables care leavers to remain living with their foster carers when they turn 18.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2024.

Inspection dates: 17 to 21 November 2025

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency

contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 30 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children receive exceptional quality care from their foster carers and, as a result, make significant progress from their starting points. Foster carers have immense pride and affection for the children that they look after and know the children well. This helps children to feel loved and supports children to develop a strong sense of belonging and permanence. In addition, a significant number of children experience placement stability and children are supported by the agency to stay with their foster carers as long as they need to. Arrangements such as 'staying put' are discussed and planned in a timely way. This helps children to experience continuity of relationships with trusted adults and further reinforces their important position within the foster family.

The quality of relationships between children and their foster carers is incredibly strong. Comments from children about their foster carers include:

I love being loved and cannot think of anything [Name of foster carer] could do better.

[Name of foster carer] has helped me with everything and has helped me to be more positive about life. [Name of foster carer] knows me well and gives me a hug when I am upset.

Children are welcomed into their foster family in a carefully planned and considered way. There is a tight working relationship between the agency's family finding team, foster carers, the agency's supervising social workers and local authorities. This helps to support the sharing of relevant information where a child's needs are considered alongside the foster carers' strengths and vulnerabilities. This reduces the risk of children moving in with foster carers who cannot meet their needs. Wherever possible, the agency also ensures that when a child moves into their new foster placement, it is meticulously planned. This ensures that the child has the best start in their new home and to settle in quickly. There is an exceptionally strong commitment on the part of the agency in keeping brothers and sisters together whenever feasible.

The agency has worked extremely hard to promote placement stability since the last inspection. Management oversight of placement endings has significantly improved. The dedication and commitment by leaders and managers to learn when things do not go well for children have led to several changes within staff practice. This has resulted in a sustained reduction of unplanned placement endings for children.

The agency and its foster carers support children to make very good progress with their physical health, emotional well-being and education. Children have access to a range of universal health services and are supported to access specialist services when they need to. On occasions, where children are struggling to get the help they

need, the agency funds this. This helped one child to receive a much-needed specialist assessment in a timely way. In addition, foster carers can get support and advice from the agency's health adviser and clinical psychologist. This further supports foster carers to meet the needs of the children that they care for. Equally, the agency's education support service and foster carers work tirelessly to develop positive working relationships with external professionals. Consequently, children make excellent progress with their learning and education.

Children have access to a wide range of social and recreational opportunities. The agency arranges many activities that children can join in with. This includes after-school activities, trips, holidays and access to a charitable fund which exists specifically to support children as they move towards independence. Foster carers were unanimous in their view that the activities that the agency organises supports foster carers and children to be able to get to know one another and feel part of a 'wider family'. The opportunities that the agency provides for children help them to develop new skills and make friends.

In addition, comments from children who attend the Teamies group for teenagers were extremely positive and included statements such as 'Teamies is inclusive of everyone', 'I like doing things with my friends, talking and doing activities' and 'I enjoy coming to see my friends and doing fun activities'.

Foster carers have an extremely positive relationship with the agency. Leaders and managers are strongly committed to ensuring that foster carers are provided with high-quality training, supervision and support. Foster carers said that they feel valued, supported and the not-for-profit nature of the agency aligns with their own personal values.

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

Children feel safe because they have strong and trusted relationships with their foster carers and can talk to them about any worries that they may have. In addition, children have access to a range of trusted adults they can talk to outside of their foster family about any worries they may have. This includes the supervising social workers and the fostering support worker. In addition, children are regularly consulted by agency staff about their feelings regarding their safety and well-being. However, not all children are seen in line with the agency's policy or provided the chance to speak alone with a supervising social worker. This shortfall prevents children from being offered a private space to talk about any worries they may have or raise any concerns about the care that they are receiving.

The quality of children's risk management plans has significantly improved, and children now benefit from having a plan that is individual to their specific needs and vulnerabilities. These are subject to regular review and updated where needed. The risk management plans are written in a clear manner, and this helps foster carers to understand a child's specific risks and what they need to do to keep them safe.

The process for the recruitment and assessment of prospective foster carers is thorough. This reduces the risk of unsuitable adults entering the assessment process. The fostering panel is thorough in its discussions, and these are well documented. The agency decision-maker has excellent knowledge and experience for the role. The panel process helps with the safe recruitment of applicants to foster.

Once prospective foster parents are approved by the fostering panel, their suitability to foster is reviewed by the agency on a yearly basis by an independent chair. These mechanisms ensure that only suitable adults work with and continue to care for children.

Foster carers receive training which supports them to keep children safe. As a result, children receive a strong response from their foster carers if they go missing from home or are absent from home without authorisation. Foster carers are proactive in searching for children until they are found. After a child returns home, the agency is proactive in ensuring that an independent return home interview is arranged by the child's placing authority. Where this does not happen, the agency escalates this as a concern to the relevant professionals.

Equally, foster carers are trained in de-escalation techniques. This helps them to understand how to respond to children who are in crisis. Consequently, children are very rarely held by their foster carers, and on the few occasions that this happens, it is done as a last resort and to keep the child safe.

The agency's response to allegations made in respect of foster carers is good. All allegations are responded to quickly, and appropriate steps are taken by the agency to ensure that the child is safeguarded and supported. The agency ensures that relevant professionals and agencies, including Ofsted, are notified. Alongside this, foster carers who are subject to an allegation are provided with appropriate support. When needed, foster carers are returned to the fostering panel to provide independent scrutiny and decision-making. This sometimes includes a foster carer no longer being deemed suitable. This prevents unsafe adults from being able to care for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers operate an ethical organisation that is focused on providing high-quality care. This results in positive outcomes for children. Leaders and managers are highly ambitious for children, reflective, transparent and understand the importance of creating a learning culture. They are open to improving the experiences, progress and safety of children. This is through feedback from children, foster carers, staff and external agencies.

Leaders and managers have worked at pace to address the shortfalls identified during the last inspection. They have an excellent understanding of the strengths of the agency and have clear plans in place to support its continuous development.

The registered manager is highly committed to ensuring that children are provided with opportunities that will support them to make excellent progress and lead happy and fulfilled lives. He has excellent oversight of the experiences, progress and safety of children. This is through management oversight tools and close working relationships with his staff and foster carers. The registered manager is supported by an equally enthusiastic responsible individual. Together, they have made many improvements to the service that are recognised by both staff and foster carers.

Staff morale is excellent. Staff feel supported in their roles and enjoy working for the agency. They are committed to making a positive difference to children's lives. Staff describe a safe learning environment where leaders and managers are receptive to their ideas to improve the service. They value the support they receive from the clinical psychologist, who provides staff with reflective, clinical supervision when they need this. Staff are extremely proud to work for the agency as their values align with the agency's not-for-profit ethos.

Leaders and managers are committed to the continuous professional development of their staff and foster carers to support their development. In addition, staff benefit from regular supervision. However, the quality of supervision records for staff is variable. Some records are not dated, and it is not clear who the supervisor is. The content of some records does not fully capture the discussions between the supervisor and supervisee. This shortfall weakens the integrity of supervision notes and weakens accountability.

Leaders and managers have a strong commitment to promoting tolerance and diversity. It is of note that leaders and managers took a firm position in relation to the racial tensions caused by the current political climate. They took decisive action to support, reassure and safeguard children, foster carers and staff who were vulnerable due to their ethnicity.

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are provided the opportunity to communicate their views on all aspects of their care. This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that agency policy is followed in relation to children being seen on their own so that children are provided the opportunity to speak in private about the care they are receiving. (Fostering services: national minimum standards, 1.3)
- The registered person should ensure that a written record is kept by the fostering service detailing the time, date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff. This content of supervision should effectively and consistently record discussions that support case management. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, 24.5)

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: SC033433

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