

Fusion Fostering North West

Fusion Fostering Limited

Fusion Fostering North West, 26 Hastings Road, Leyland PR25 3SP

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Fusion Fostering North West Fostering Service is a branch of a privately run fostering agency. The agency offers a range of foster placements, including long-term, short-term and emergency placements for children from birth up to age 17. When children reach the age of 18, they can remain living with foster carers as young adults.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had 24 carer households providing care to 36 children.

Fusion Fostering North West registered in August 2016.

There has been no registered manager in this agency since February 2024. The current manager has been in post since April 2024 and has applied to register with Ofsted.

The inspection was completed on site at the office. Inspection activity included speaking with managers, supervising social workers, foster carers, children and other professionals.

Inspection dates: 11 until the 14 November 2024

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: 17 January 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 placed by the agency are making progress in all areas of their lives. They benefit from living with foster carers who receive high-quality training, support and guidance from staff. This provides foster carers with the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the children in their care effectively.

Children live in settled and stable homes. They receive a high level of care that is loving and supportive. Foster carers form trusting relationships with children, which enhances children's progress and sense of security. One child described their foster carer as 'nice' and living with them as 'really good'.

Children's interests are nurtured, and they are encouraged to try new things. Most children are attending clubs and taking part in activities. The agency hosts regular events for children, such as trips to the circus, sports matches, museums and the zoo. Children are often taken on holiday by their carers, both in this country and abroad.

Foster carers promote children's education. If schools are not meeting children's needs, staff and foster carers work together to advocate on the children's behalf to ensure the best educational outcomes.

Children's health needs are well understood, and foster carers meet these needs effectively. Foster carers are quick to respond if children need medical attention. They support children to attend health appointments and to make healthy choices in line with their age and stage of development.

Children are supported to maintain strong and positive relationships with people who are important to them. When it is agreed and appropriate, foster carers make sure that children see family members.

Children reaching the age of 18 are supported to remain living with their foster carers if they wish to do so. One young person, who continues to live with their carers, has successfully completed their compulsory education and achieved qualifications. They recently passed their driving test and secured a full-time job.

The agency provides an excellent service to children who are unaccompanied asylum seekers. One child was helped to maintain key relationships with people from their birth country, including taking a trip to visit family.

The agency has developed positive and effective working relationships with other professionals for the benefit of children. When decisions are made that may not be in the child's best interests, these are respectfully but confidently challenged and escalated when necessary.

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

Children have thorough and individualised safe care plans in place, which are updated regularly. They outline identified risks and what action foster carers can take to help them keep children safe.

Children and foster carers have regular contact with a supervising social worker through planned and unplanned visits and telephone calls. Foster carers value the support provided by the social workers. One carer said their supervising social worker was 'very helpful and knowledgeable'. Supervising social workers spend time with children; however, children's views are not always captured in records.

The agency provides training and support to help foster carers understand and manage children's behaviour. An in-house therapist provides additional opportunities for carers to discuss strategies to provide further support to children.

The agency has a safeguarding lead who regularly monitors safeguarding concerns to ensure that children are kept safe and practice is consistent.

Foster carers benefit from training in subjects that help to keep children safe. Carers value the training on offer; they say it is of high quality and useful to them. Carers can request specialist training if required to help them manage any emerging needs of a child in their care.

Children rarely go missing from home or need to be held to keep them safe. However, if they do, they receive an effective response to ensure their safety. The manager reviews all incidents and proactively takes action if needed to address any training needs. Most serious incidents are reported to the relevant agencies; however, on occasion, some incidents have not been notified to Ofsted.

Children are provided with a children's guide written by the agency, which gives them information about who to contact if they need to make a complaint or are worried. The guide is colourful and age-appropriate; however, some of its content is out of date.

Safer recruitment practices are in place and the manager goes above and beyond to check that only people who are safe to work with children are employed by the agency, and only people who are safe to care for children are approved.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The acting manager is new to the role. He is committed to providing high standards of care. The manager is supported in his role by a deputy and two experienced practice managers, who share his motivation and drive to improve outcomes for children placed with the agency's approved foster carers.

Since the last inspection, there have been several changes to the staff team. However, efforts have been made to ensure that the agency has enough staff to

meet the needs of foster carers and children. Staff are experienced and provide a high level of support to foster carers. A planned and thorough handover took place between the new manager and the previous manager to provide consistency and stability.

Staff benefit from regular supervision and team meetings that provide them with the opportunity to seek support and reflect on their practice. Appraisals take place annually by a suitably qualified person; however, they do not consider the views of children who are placed with the agency's foster carers.

Members of the fostering panel are experienced and form part of a stable team that operates centrally for the Northwest and for the agency's other branches nationally. The independent panel members have a wide range of personal and professional skills; however, the panel does not currently reflect the ethnic diversity of the community it represents. Panel is supported by a knowledgeable panel manager, a reviewing officer and agency decision-maker. It is a highly effective and efficiently run panel.

There is a nurturing and open culture of learning in the agency. Reflection and development are embedded throughout practice, and points of learning are shared with staff, panel and the wider agency to ensure continued improvement. Staff receive ongoing support and regular training to enable them to do their jobs effectively.

Management oversight of practice is organised and effective. The agency uses innovative methods to track children's progress in health and education. A quality and compliance team works collaboratively to provide an additional layer of scrutiny, which helps to improve the quality of practice.

Foster carers benefit from regular support groups which are well attended. One foster carer described the agency as amazing and said the staff are 'supportive, caring and thoughtful'.

The two recommendations made at the previous inspection have been met.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that information in the children's guide and other key documents is kept up to date. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 16.4)
- The registered person should ensure that there is a system in place to notify, within 24 hours, persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 29.1)
- The registered person should ensure that the wishes, feelings and views of children and those significant to them are appropriately recorded and considered in monitoring foster carers and developing the fostering service. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 1.7)
- The registered person should ensure that the formal appraisal of staff considers any views of children the service is providing for. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 24.6)
- The registered person should ensure that fostering panel membership should appropriately reflect the diversity of the community. ('The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4', Section 5.8)

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: 1225624

Registered provider: Fusion Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: Old Mill, Maltravers House, Petters Way, Yeovil,
Somerset BA20 1SH

Responsible individual: David Tucker

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Inspectors

Zillah Brooks, Social Care Inspector
Michelle Greenhalgh, Social Care Inspector

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