

Infinity Foster Care

Infinity Foster Care Ltd

Infinity Foster Care, 1st Floor, Cranbrook House, 61 Cranbrook Road, Ilford, London IG1 4PG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency is based in Ilford, London. The service provides short-term care, bridging placements, long-term care, respite care, emergency care and sibling placements. The service also provides foster care for disabled children, and several parent and child placements.

At the time of this inspection, the fostering agency had 17 approved fostering households with 28 children in placement.

This service was registered with Ofsted in August 2019. The manager was registered at the same time.

Inspection dates: 9 to 13 September 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: 23 August 2021

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 enabled to build trusted and secure relationships with their foster carers, who know them well, listen to them and promote their welfare. Children are enabled to develop an appropriate sense of permanence and belonging and are fully included in their foster carers' family lives, for example attending family events or holidays.

Children make good progress from their starting points. Children's achievements are celebrated and appropriately rewarded. For example, a special celebration was organised by the agency for a child with additional needs when they successfully gained a place at college.

Children are supported to actively participate in decisions about their lives. Supervising social workers see children alone to gain and understand their wishes and feelings. Children contribute to their looked after reviews by participating in meetings and providing feedback in advance. The agency has provided training for carers and staff to help them develop skills in communicating with children who communicate non-verbally.

Children's educational needs are met well. Foster carers are ambitious for children, they support children to attend school and support their learning at home. There is effective liaison with the schools and carers, and supervising social workers attend children's education meetings.

Children enjoy access to a range of social and recreational opportunities, including activities in the local community, where possible. Children also participate in trips with their foster families, including holidays abroad. They are supported to engage in faith-based activities to develop their faith if they wish. These opportunities help children to have positive experiences and memories. Foster carers record these well to contribute to children's life-story work.

Children, including those with complex needs, are supported to develop their independence in line with their individual needs. This includes vital life skills like attending to their personal care, money management or cooking.

Children are supported to improve their health. Carers ensure that children have access to local health services and specialist advice when needed. For some children, this has significantly improved their quality of life. For example, one child was supported to achieve improved mobility and no longer requires the care of a dietician or asthma clinic.

Foster carers support children to spend time, directly and indirectly, with their family, friends and other people who are important to them.

Referrals are considered carefully. Since the last inspection, the decision-making process for children moving into fostering families has been strengthened. Over time, the number of unplanned endings has significantly decreased. The agency works well with local authorities to ensure that full information is shared with foster carers before a child moves in so that appropriate care and support can be provided. Carers are actively involved in planning for the child, and their views are valued. When carers experience difficulties in partnership working, staff advocate on their behalf to get children and carers the help and support they need.

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

Children are protected from harm. Children can identify a trusted adult who they can talk to about any concerns. Individual up-to-date risk assessments address children's known vulnerabilities effectively and set out what action staff and foster carers should take to reduce the risks.

Children rarely go missing from their homes. When they do, their foster carers act in line with the agency's missing-from-home procedures. The agency works well with all professionals working with children and, when appropriate, their families, to ensure that children are safe and return home quickly. Return home interviews are offered and arranged by the local authority and attended by the supervising social worker. This ensures that information is well shared between partners in children's best interests.

Children receive help to manage their behaviour and feelings safely. Foster carers respond with clear boundaries about what is safe and acceptable and seek to understand the triggers for children's behaviour. Foster carers receive support from an external therapist employed by the agency to develop their understanding on the potential impact of abuse and neglect on the behaviour and needs of children.

The agency promotes safe care by making unannounced visits to foster carers at least annually and ensuring that children have regular opportunities to speak to a trusted professional without their foster carers.

The agency manages allegations against members of fostering households well. If concerns are raised, leaders and managers share information with relevant safeguarding agencies, including the local authority designated officer. Any agreed recommendations are followed up quickly and appropriate action is taken to protect children from harm. Referrals to external agencies are made when required, for example to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Safer recruitment practices are not consistently robust. Discrepancies in the employment history, references and gaps in employment are not explored for all staff. Furthermore, the reasons why previous relevant employment ended are not consistently considered.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The agency is managed effectively by a permanent, suitably experienced and qualified registered manager. The culture of the agency is characterised by high expectations and aspirations for all children. This is demonstrated in practice. The agency has recently increased its staffing in response to the increasing numbers of foster carers and children. This included recruiting a deputy manager to strengthen the leadership team.

Leaders and managers use learning from practice and feedback to improve the experiences and care of children. For example, since the last inspection, several forms used by the agency and language used to record children's lived experience have been changed after consultation. Case records reflect children's lives and the work that is carried out with them. The style of recording is child-friendly and helps children understand their histories and experiences.

Leaders and managers monitor the quality of care provided in the agency and share their reports with Ofsted. However, the reports do not include evidence of consultation with placing authorities or their plans for further improvement.

The agency works proactively and positively with other agencies and professionals. Carers and professionals told the inspector about the good quality care and support provided by leaders and managers as well as the good quality care carers provide to the children they care for.

Staff enjoy working for this agency. They receive regular supervision, which provides opportunities for reflective discussions about practice. However, staff appraisals do not set up developmental goals for staff and do not include, when appropriate, feedback from children.

The children's guide has been reviewed since the last inspection. Additionally, new guides for younger children have been created. However, none of them were shared with Ofsted, which affects the regulator's oversight of the service.

Carers provided positive feedback on the support they receive from the agency, and they enjoy the family-like approach. Carers receive regular supervision and a formal annual review. However, training offered to foster carers does not always respond to the specific and complex needs of children, for example to support the carers of children with disabilities or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. In addition, one carer had not completed any training during a yearly review period.

The fostering panel is led by an experienced chair and supported by panel members who have a wide range of knowledge and experience. Paperwork is sent to panel members in a timely manner. This allows a good review and oversight of the quality of assessments. A good level of curiosity is shown during panel meetings, and the questions asked are helping panel members to make informed recommendations. All panel members actively contribute to discussions and decision-making.

Effective action has been taken to address requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection.

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— keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and children’s guide, notify the Chief Inspector of any such revision within 28 days. (Regulation 4(a)(b))	13 December 2024
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, or allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, 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)(b) (3)(c))	13 December 2024
The registered person must maintain a system for— monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster	13 December 2024

parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority). (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (3))	
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Recommendations

- Support and training is made available to foster carers, including hard to reach carers, to assist them in meeting the specific needs of the children they are caring for or are expected to care for. In particular, the registered person should ensure that all carers complete training as per expectations and that training responds to the needs of children in their care, for example unaccompanied children seeking asylum or children with disabilities. (Fostering services: national minimum standards, 20.8)
- Assessment and appraisal of all staff involved in fostering work takes account of identified skills needed for particular roles and is used to identify individuals' learning and development needs. (Fostering services: national minimum standards, 23.5)
- All staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and, where they are working with children, this appraisal takes into account any views of children the service is providing for. (Fostering services: national minimum standards, 24.6)

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: 2537401

Registered provider: Infinity Foster Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Infinity Foster Care Ltd, Cranbrook House, 61 Cranbrook Road, Ilford, London IG1 4PG

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Inspector

Aneta Wasilewska, Social Care Inspector

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