

Nexus Fostering Midlands and West

Nexus Fostering LTD

Montford House, Suite 1 and 2 St George Court, Telford, TF2 7AS

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Nexus Fostering Midlands and West provides fostering services across the West and East Midlands and surrounding areas. Prior to December 2024 the area was part of one national agency but has now been split into a separate registration.

The fostering agency provides a wide range of placements including short-term, long-term, parent and child, complex health needs and supported placements with additional therapeutic support for children with the highest level of need.

At the time of the inspection, there were 136 fostering households providing care for 175 children.

Inspection dates: 3 to 7 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 **outstanding**

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: N/A

Overall judgement at last inspection: N/A

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

This fostering agency was registered in December 2024 and is part of a larger organisation. Due to continuing with the same robust services that were already in place, they have been able to consistently provide excellent support to foster carers and children with minimal impact from the change of registration.

Children build trusted and secure relationships with their foster families. They receive excellent, nurturing care which helps them to make significant progress and flourish. They develop a strong sense of identity and experience a wide range of positive personal achievements. As a result, the children experience enjoyable childhoods, benefit from excellent parenting, and have a wide range of opportunities to develop their self-esteem and emotional resilience. When asked about where they live, one child said 'the best thing is being cared for and feeling loved. Nothing could be better, everything is perfect.'

Children benefit from very stable placements thanks to careful, child centred planning and decision making by a dedicated team. A high proportion of children have lived with their foster carers for many years, and some have benefitted from special guardianship orders or remaining with their carers when they become young adults under Staying Put arrangements. Foster carers show dedication and commitment towards the children, welcoming them into their home and accepting them into their family. This helps children to feel a real sense of belonging and promotes the development of secure, loving relationships between the children and their foster families.

Children are supported through a wide range of tailored placements to meet their individual needs. Different initiatives and levels of support help each child to receive the support that they need. For example, supported placements for children with high needs allow foster carers to receive regular support from in house clinicians and additional respite whilst the child also benefits from dedicated support work. Planned multi agency meetings are built into the package of support so that all professionals involved can work together to support the child, review their progress and adjust the package of support when needed. This level of support makes placements more sustainable and helps to reduce placement breakdowns. Several children have had their packages reduced as a result of the excellent progress they have made.

Foster carers understand children's needs very well and are skilled in providing nurturing, therapeutic care. The agency has an extensive support system in place with clinicians involved at every stage. Clinical input into assessments helps the agency to identify prospective carers who have the skills and potential to provide therapeutic care for children with the highest needs, and training and support is put in place early to help prepare them for their role. Clinicians are also available to support all foster carers even when there is no enhanced package of support in

place. Foster carers are very complimentary about this support and the way it helps them to understand children's needs.

Children benefit from a high level of support with their education. A team of education professionals are employed to monitor children's educational engagement and progress and provide support where needed. Staff had supported one child to obtain an EHCP after a significant wait, and another had been supported to reintegrate into school after an exclusion. There is excellent partnership working with schools and commissioning teams which has enabled the agency to deliver training to schools on attachment and trauma which has assisted them to understand children's complex backgrounds and the impact it can have on their learning. Feedback from this initiative has been extremely positive.

The agency has recently introduced a neurodiversity lead who provides support to children, foster carers and staff. They are highly trained and are extremely ambitious about the difference they can make to people's lives. Through specialist coaching they have helped foster carers to understand children's needs and behaviours better. They also work with individual children to help them recognise the positives about themselves which increases their self-esteem and confidence. Neurodiverse staff can attend a targeted wellbeing group. Furthermore, policies and procedures now consider neurodiverse, equality, diversity and inclusion perspectives, which promotes excellent inclusive practice across the agency.

Children receive personal and sensitively written end of placement letters that capture their unique journey. These letters include beautiful photographs, memories, and reflections on children's achievements while sensitively acknowledging challenges that occurred along the way. This practice evidences the agency's commitment to ensuring children have positive endings and are supported in making sense of their lived experiences away from their birth families.

Children are at the centre of the agency's practice and there are several initiatives in place to help children achieve excellent outcomes. A dedicated participation lead oversees activity planning across the agency and arranges targeted events for specific groups of children. For example, during the school holidays several older children had taken part in workshops about interview skills, CV writing and identity. Some young people are taking part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, with some achieving their gold award and now supporting other children to do the same.

The agency is committed to listening to children and responding to their feedback. Children are seen regularly by supervising social workers and support workers meaning that there is ongoing consultation with them. A group of child ambassadors meet regularly and have recently developed an agency newsletter which is sent to all fostering families. They were supported to visit a magazine publisher before producing the newsletters to help them develop new skills and gain confidence in their abilities. Ambassadors have also requested more information about 'life after care' and the agency has responded by sourcing and implementing an independence app where children can easily access information to help them prepare for adulthood.

Assessments of prospective foster carers is a strength of the agency. They use their own bespoke assessment which helps to ensure that applicants have the skills and experience to make excellent foster carers and that they are well suited to the agency's ethos. Assessments are timely and preparation of foster carers is comprehensive. The assessment, pre-approval training and preparation processes help applicants to understand the challenges that they may face and the strategies and support that are available to them.

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

There are effective safeguarding arrangements throughout the agency that keep children safe and promote their well-being. Managers have a comprehensive understanding of their roles and responsibilities to the children and adults. Safeguarding incidents are rare, but when they do occur, they are effectively managed in close partnership with other agencies.

Prospective foster carers are prepared and supported to understand the potential impact of abuse and neglect throughout their assessment period and a secure base model is embedded within the assessment process so that any concerns can be identified and addressed. Where appropriate, measured decisions are made not to progress applications. This assessment model also supports panel members and agency decision makers to keep safeguarding at the heart of their rationale when deciding whether to approve foster carers.

Children feel safe living with their foster carers and state that they have positive relationships with their foster families and supporting staff. They were confident to confide in the adults who support them about any worries they may have. When children do raise concerns, they are listened to and taken seriously. Foster carers and staff have excellent knowledge of the potential risks to the children and follow established procedures to keep them safe.

Carers receive dedicated support to help them understand and manage children's behaviour. A member of staff has recently completed training on a specific behaviour management approach and is now able to train and support other staff and foster carers. They work closely with the clinical staff so that a therapeutic approach is consistently embedded into practice. Early results from this new initiative have been excellent. Thanks to the support received one fostering family has been able to develop new skills and approaches to manage the needs of a child who displayed a high level of physical aggression. Over a short space of time the child's behaviour has significantly reduced, the child is much calmer, and the placement is more stable.

The agency's safeguarding training is thorough and well embedded, ensuring that staff and foster carers identify and respond appropriately to children's vulnerabilities and risks. When shortfalls in carers safeguarding practices have been identified, staff

are proactive in ensuring this is addressed through further training, support and supervision.

Allegations are managed robustly. There is excellent multi agency working and managers are not afraid to challenge other professionals when the correct processes have not been followed. Managers are professionally curious and complete extensive checks of records to assess whether any warning signs were missed. Foster carers are placed on hold when necessary but are provided with excellent support. In addition to referrals to external support services, the agency has funded counselling sessions and provided in house support from the agency's clinician when foster carers are struggling with the impact of an allegation. This support helps foster carers to manage difficult emotions in a safe way that does not interfere with the formal investigation process.

There is a very low number of children who go missing compared to the size of the agency. Staff and foster carers understand what action to take when incidents do occur and there is effective working with police and placing authorities including where there are additional concerns about possible exploitation while missing.

The wide range of training, support and opportunities for children and foster carers to talk through their feelings and develop new skills reduces the risk of disruption for children. Managers and staff make robust decisions about whether foster carers have the skills to meet children's needs safely and are not afraid to reject placement requests where they do not feel they can keep children safe. In addition, they are proactive in calling for stability meetings where children's placements are not progressing well. They provide a wide range of interventions to support foster carers and the children and there is comprehensive monitoring of unplanned endings to identify and act upon any lessons learned. As a result, the number of unplanned endings are low.

Managers have not always ensured that medication given to children is monitored closely enough. Records are held of the medication children are prescribed, however there is no expectation for foster carers to record when regular medication is given and there is insufficient monitoring by supervising social workers to ensure that it has been given correctly. This limits the agency's ability to ensure that medication is being given safely.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The effectiveness of the agency's work is directly attributable to the high quality leadership and management of the service. In particular, the leadership team have ensured the transition into the new registration has been seamless which has minimised disruption to staff, foster carers and children.

The agency is managed by a suitably qualified and highly experienced manager and management team. Managers and staff have an ambitious vision and are child centred in all aspects of their practice. They use a range of internal and external strength-based quality assurance processes that monitor progress, identify areas for

development and implement changes. The management team are very proactive and creative and are consistently striving to improve practice. As a result, children and foster carers receive high quality care and support.

Warm, welcoming and knowledgeable managers and staff respond well to people who are considering fostering. For example, specifically trained workers undertake all initial visits, this ensures there is consistent practice and clear overview of all applicants from the start of the process. This approach is well received, with potential foster carers reporting that they have found the visits 'informative and helpful'.

A key strength of this agency is its staff. They bring a wealth of knowledge and experience and share the agency's child-centred ethos. Staffing is stable and different teams work seamlessly together to support children and carers. Staff are therapeutic, empathetic and have a very clear sense of care and responsibility towards children and foster carers. Managers provide excellent support and staff value the frequent reflective supervision that they receive. Managers are keen to utilise staff's individual skills and interests which they use to develop new roles within the agency, and this helps staff to feel passionate about their roles and become experts in their field.

Leaders and managers are committed to providing children with the support they need. Whilst there are numerous packages of support available, on occasions there can be difficulties obtaining the necessary funding from placing authorities quickly enough. What stands out is that despite this, managers still provide the additional support, and the cost is borne by the agency. This goes over and above what would be expected and helps to ensure that children's support is not hampered by any delays in commissioning processes or waiting times for services.

Foster carers have access to an array of different training opportunities. Managers are proactive in developing new ways of delivering training so that it is accessible to all carers. They have worked extensively with a training provider who has developed a new creative system which incorporates online learning, podcasts and videos as well as traditional training courses. Managers use their monitoring to identify where new training is required and bespoke training is developed. There is a strong emphasis on learning from experts and people with lived experience which helps to keep carers engaged and keen to learn. For example, a podcast was produced with a leading expert on ADHD and foster carers with experience of going through the allegations process have helped deliver training to new carers.

Monitoring tools are used extensively to monitor, review and remain professionally curious about all aspects of the agency and the lived experiences of foster carers and children. As a result, managers and staff continue to use learning and research to ensure foster carers are enabled to deliver outstanding care to children.

Foster panel arrangements are strong. There is a skilled and experienced panel chair, effective panel members and experienced and knowledgeable agency decision makers. There are regular opportunities for meetings where practice and learning

can be shared. Panel members have access to the same extensive training as staff and have all completed therapeutic training which they use when analysing matters presented to them.

Feedback received from staff, foster carers and professionals was overwhelmingly positive. Foster carers were extremely complimentary about the relationships they have with staff and managers. One stated "My supervising social worker has been exceptional. She not only provides regular contact and emotional support but also offers practical advice that helps me manage the day-to-day challenges of such a complex placement. I have never felt like I am managing this alone. She takes time to understand the child's individual needs and my perspective as a carer, which has made a significant difference to the stability of the placement."

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

Recommendations

- The registered person must ensure that foster carers keep a written record of all medication given to children during their placement and that there is effective monitoring of any medication given.

(Fostering Services National Minimum Standards, 2011, page 18 paragraph 6.11).

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: 2810756

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