

Pathways Care South West

Pathway Care South West Limited

Glentor, Balland Lane, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7DA

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency is operated by the National Fostering Group, which is a national provider of independent fostering services.

At the time of this inspection, 54 foster carers were registered with the agency, caring for 64 children and young people.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 21 October 2015.

Inspection dates: 7 to 10 July 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: 17 October 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

Many children live in stable homes. Children describe care that embraces them into their fostering family. For example, children go on holidays in the UK and abroad, and they attend family events. This helps children to create shared memories and strong connections with their foster carer's family.

When children's needs increase, focused interventions are offered to foster carers and children to ensure that children's needs are understood and met. This includes the provision of therapeutic interventions that one carer referred to as 'priceless'. For some children, the provision of increased support has reduced the risk of them leaving their care arrangements in an unplanned way. Additionally, the service provides seamless support and guidance for foster carers out of hours when they need it most.

Children's views are valued. Their views directly influence service delivery. They are involved in staff recruitment, carer assessments, and they have contributed to the development of key practice documents, such as safer caring plans. Their investment in the service is derived from the warm and trusting relationships that many children have developed with managers and staff. These relationships allow children to speak openly with staff about their care experiences.

Children make progress educationally, and some children have excelled from their starting points. Children who are at risk of exclusion are monitored closely to ensure that timely support is implemented. Additionally, children are offered unique experiences and participate in activity projects in the UK and abroad that vastly enhance their life skills that they take through into adulthood.

Foster carers provide skilled care to meet children's specific needs. This includes care provided for children who are new to the UK and for children who have complex health care needs. Foster carers benefit from a range of training courses to increase their knowledge and skills needed to meet children's specific needs effectively. This includes safer sleep training for those who provide care for babies and young children.

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

When required, investigations of foster carers are thorough. Children are seen and heard. Managers write to children to help them to understand the actions that they have taken to address concerns. Managers take time to reflect on significant events that have occurred to improve practice and experiences for children.

Restraint has been used. All incidents are recorded and reviewed, and children's views are sought. The agency's approach to ensure that foster carers receive training relevant to restraint is comprehensive and is always provided alongside therapeutic support to ensure that restraint is used as the last resort.

Children know how to complain when they are unhappy about their care. The service has developed its practice to ensure that children are informed of the outcome of their complaints.

In the main, safer caring plans and risk assessments identify children's vulnerabilities. Foster carers are provided with guidance that they follow to respond to concerns effectively. Plans are often completed with children and some plans include useful links to online safety resources to help foster carers to understand how to keep children safe.

Children who go missing continues to be low. Risks are well-understood and foster carers have acted quickly to reduce harm to children. Support is implemented and plans are updated to ensure that all involved with the child's life respond to reduce the risk of further missing incidents.

Recruitment procedures reduce the risk of unsuitable persons being employed by the service. Managers who are involved in staff recruitment processes have completed training relevant to safer recruitment.

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

This service has a very strong retention of managers and staff. Staff team members speak enthusiastically about their roles. They are overwhelmingly positive about the support that they receive from their managers. They describe a learning environment in which they feel listened to and valued. Staff receive reflective supervision that is recorded effectively and specific supervision sessions that consider the impact of their work upon them.

Social workers visit foster carers regularly and unannounced visits are completed at different times of the day to better understand children's care. Some supervision visit records are worthy of wider dissemination. They demonstrate challenge and reflection with foster carers that explore how best to meet children's needs and to keep them safe. In other examples, records do not demonstrate professional curiosity about children's experiences and safe care, nor was this reflected in discussions with inspectors. Managers have not addressed these areas of weaknesses effectively.

The service has developed its assessments that match foster carers as suitable to care for children. However, assessments are often not completed before children move into the home, and the impact for children already living in the home, and on the foster carers capacity to meet each child's needs, is not assessed. This reduces opportunities to consider any additional actions that may be needed to ensure that children live together safely and to maximise stability for children.

Managers have failed to ensure that there is sufficient oversight of all adults living in the fostering household. While necessary checks are carried out for adult household

members, information about how they contribute to a safe environment for the child is not always collated to inform decisions about the ongoing suitability of the fostering household. In one example, this has reduced opportunities to be alert to serious concerns that have occurred. At the time of this inspection, actions to improve practice in this area have not been implemented.

Managers and staff raise concerns with children's placing authorities when they are concerned about children's care planning arrangements with varying degrees of success. In one example, unclear care planning arrangements for a parent and child placement has led to confusion about reporting a potential safeguarding concern, and the parent's individual care rights have not been fully recognised.

Recent changes to the fostering panel are working effectively. The fostering panel is led by a new and experienced panel chair. Discussions and recommendations made by the panel are recorded clearly, as are decisions made by the Agency Decision Maker. They describe good-quality and timely reports received from the fostering service.

Foster carer feedback is positive about their experiences with the service. They speak highly of staff working with them to support the children in their care. Since the previous inspection, the number of foster carers has reduced, mostly due to personal reasons. Managers told inspectors that local recruitment activities are planned to increase the service's overall fostering capacity.

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, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that—</p> <p>the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (a))</p> <p>In particular, the registered manager must ensure that foster carer supervision records consistently demonstrate how children's safe care is promoted in and out of the home.</p> <p>Additionally, the registered manager must ensure that all staff are alert to signs that might indicate a child is at risk of harm, including from adults living in fostering household.</p>	10 September 2025
<p>The fostering service provider must review the approval of each foster parent in accordance with this regulation.</p> <p>When undertaking a review, the fostering service provider must—</p> <p>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. (Regulation 28 (1) (3)(a))</p> <p>In particular, the registered manager must ensure that in determining the ongoing suitability of the fostering household, there is sufficient information collated about all adult household members.</p>	10 September 2025
<p>The registered person must before deciding to place a child with foster carers take into account all matters set out in schedule 3 in making their decision under regulation 17 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.</p>	10 September 2025

<p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that matching assessments are completed before children move into the home and that the impact for children already living in the home, and on the foster carers capacity to meet each child's needs, is assessed.</p>	
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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: SC367941

Registered provider: Pathway Care South West Limited

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Lynn Webb

Registered manager: Janet Parmenter-Delaney

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Inspectors

Louise Bacon, Social Care Inspector

Hannah Spencer-Townesend, Social Care Inspector

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