

ISP Midlands

ISP

Senate House, Saxon Business Park, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, B60 4AD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

ISP Midlands is a privately owned independent fostering agency and is part of a limited company. This is the agency's first inspection after registration on 2 September 2024.

The agency offers short-term, long-term, sibling, respite and parent and child placements. At the time of this inspection, there were 78 fostering households caring for 137 children.

There is a permanent registered manager in post. The manager is social work qualified and registered with Social Work England.

Inspection dates: 14 and 18 July 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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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	outstanding
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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: not previously inspected

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are at the heart of this agency. They receive individualised, child-focused and nurturing care and support. The agency's therapeutic model underpins all aspects of children's care. Children grow up feeling loved and accepted and with a sense of belonging. They form safe and secure attachments with their foster carers. One child thanked their foster carer for giving them 'a happy life'. They told their social worker that they were the happiest they had ever been.

Experienced independent social workers undertake thorough and detailed assessments of potential foster carers. Skilled assessors use a range of social work theories during this process. This supports them to determine the applicant's understanding of children's needs. Assessments analyse the strengths and vulnerabilities of potential foster carers, as well as their understanding of the care and commitment vulnerable children need.

Foster carers are highly committed and dedicated. All foster carers undertake accredited therapeutic training before their approval. This training is a continuum. Foster carers are also provided with valuable clinical support from the agency's therapists. The therapists are highly skilled individuals who enable foster carers to help children flourish. As a result of this support, foster carers are able to provide children with positive childhood experiences, which enrich children's lives. One child said, 'Now my life couldn't be any better. I have grown to love unconditionally and have a life full of love and happiness.'

Children make exceptional progress. Managers, staff and foster carers are passionate about and committed to children achieving stability. Most children grow up living with their siblings. Foster carers are respectful and supportive of all birth family connections. They promote and ensure meaningful time between children, their parents and siblings. This supports children's emotional growth and a positive sense of their identity.

A team of qualified teachers recruited by the agency works tirelessly. They are aspirational and ensure that every child receives some form of education. Children's engagement, attendance and attainment in education are phenomenal given their starting points. All children are enrolled in education within two weeks of moving in with their foster carer. This is despite some children not receiving an education for some time.

The agency's teachers and foster carers attend every child's personal education plan meeting in addition to any review of their emotional health care plans. This ensures that decisions about children's education are considered together and in their best interests. The teachers support foster carers to advocate for children. As a result, children can learn in an environment that meets their needs. This helps them to

reach their full potential. Most children remain in education, training or gain employment post 16.

The agency shares good practice with other professionals. Staff from the agency work constructively with children's schools to help contextualise children's behaviour. They support schools to adapt aspects of the curriculum to meet children's individual needs. This encourages children to express their views and develop their understanding of the wider world.

New foster carers receive exceptional support. Managers allocate them a 'buddy' who is an experienced foster carer with children of a similar age. This also supports children to build social relationships. The buddy becomes part of a foster carer's support network. This includes providing 'sleepovers', when necessary, as a form of respite. This allows foster carers to rest and reset. The agency facilitates support groups and group supervision for foster carers. They are led by experienced foster carers. This valuable support creates a family feel among foster carers and the agency.

Staff form positive relationships with foster carers' birth children. This helps to ensure that their views are heard, understood and supported. Birth children have helped the agency to design a leaflet for 'children who foster'. As a result, birth children new to fostering receive information about what to expect.

Children's participation is a strength of the agency, and their voices are prominent. A group led by children meets on a regular basis. It is well attended and ensures that children's views are heard. The group has decided the theme of the agency's annual summer event. Some children are choreographing a performance that celebrates diversity. Children are respected for who they are and who they want to be. This is influential to children developing self-confidence and a positive self-image, thus enabling them to develop aspirations and achieve their full potential.

Managers continually review how they capture and record children's views. As a result of children's feedback, the agency has changed their use of language to language that cares. In particular when gathering feedback from children about their experiences. Children feel listened to and that their wishes, views, and feelings are heard.

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

Managers, staff, and foster carers understand their safeguarding roles and responsibilities. They follow clear safeguarding procedures with diligence and care. This includes reporting and recording procedures. Safeguarding incidents rarely occur.

Foster carers are curious and remain vigilant to changes in children's behaviours. They share any concerns they have with the agency. This ensures a prompt review of children's risk assessments and safer care plans. When there are concerns around

online safety, foster carers take appropriate action. This includes liaising with the agency and other professionals. This ensures that the right support is in place to reduce risk.

Overall, the manager responds quickly to any allegations or complaints about foster carers. They work alongside relevant partner agencies while investigations take place. They follow advice and guidance to ensure there are appropriate safeguards for children. This promotes a multi-agency approach to keeping children safe. However, on one occasion, they did not report concerns about two foster carers to Ofsted. This did not compromise children's safety.

Standards of care assessments and post-allegation reviews are undertaken by independent social workers. This independent oversight ensures a thorough and rigorous review of foster carers' suitability, thus contributing to safe decision-making for children.

The recruitment of foster carers, staff and panel members is comprehensive and thorough.

Supervising social workers form positive relationships with children. They know children well and visit them on a regular basis. These relationships provide children with another trusted adult with whom to share any concerns. One child said their supervising social worker goes 'above and beyond'. The child said they provide them with 'as much assistance and support as they can'. They said, 'These types of social workers are very rare.'

Foster carers demonstrate commitment to supporting children and families, particularly in parent and child placements. However, the clarity around their roles and responsibilities in these specific arrangements requires improvement. While children remain safe and well cared for, the agency's recording systems—especially placement plans and risk assessments—do not consistently provide sufficient detail. This includes clear guidance on the actions foster carers should take to promote safety, particularly when supporting young parents who are children themselves. This has the potential to compromise the quality of local authority parenting assessments.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The agency is led by an inspirational and ambitious manager. They are enthusiastic, child centred and dedicated to achieving excellent outcomes for children. The manager is supported by an equally committed and experienced centre manager, in addition to a strong and effective leadership team. Leaders and managers all share the same ethos and vision for the agency and children.

Children's welfare is at the forefront of everything the agency does. The staff team has a diverse range of skills, knowledge and expertise. This provides foster carers and their children with wraparound support. When there is an identified need,

specialist in-house support is available. This means that children's needs are met without delay. Teamwork and professionalism within this agency are exemplary.

Staff are tenacious and passionate about their roles. They feel privileged to work at the agency. Staff speak highly of the management team and the support they receive. Most staff have personal experience of fostering. They are extremely knowledgeable about the day-to-day lives of fostering families. They have the utmost respect for foster carers and go above and beyond to support them. Managers, staff and foster carers all describe the agency as a family.

The registered manager and the responsible individual provide comprehensive and effective oversight. The manager has excellent monitoring systems in place. They complete a review at the end of every child's placement. They use learning from practice and professional feedback to enhance children's experiences. They strive for continuous improvement and have detailed and comprehensive plans in place.

The agency's fostering panel is an excellent quality assurance mechanism. Panel members are diverse in knowledge, skill and experience. This ensures careful and considered decision-making about the suitability of potential foster carers.

The manager promotes research and evidence-based practice. They share relevant and current safeguarding publications with staff. This helps to raise awareness of new and emerging safeguarding themes.

Managers ensure that supervising social workers receive regular, good-quality supervision. This provides opportunities for reflective discussions about practice and case complexities.

A comprehensive training package is available to foster carers and children. Training prepares foster carers for the reality and expectation of the fostering role. There is a strong focus on safeguarding and children's emotional well-being. Carers can also access online training as well as source their own training if they wish to.

Feedback from external professionals and stakeholders is overwhelmingly positive. One social worker said, 'Decision-making is always child focused and supportive.' Another social worker said, 'It is a privilege to work alongside such dedicated and compassionate individuals.'

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

Recommendations

The registered person should ensure that when arrangements are made by the local authority for a parent and child to live together with foster carers, the expectations of the foster carer's role are clearly set out during the placement planning process. In addition, the objectives and ongoing risk assessment of the placement should be clearly detailed for the parent as well as the foster carer. This should consider the additional responsibilities of the foster carer, any additional skills, training and support the foster carer may require and any additional insurance considerations. ('The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering services', page 13, paragraph 2.14)

- The registered person should ensure they notify the relevant persons of any significant events in accordance with regulation 36. In addition, they should ensure that managers and staff clearly record their decision-making and any action taken following a significant event. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 29.1 and 29.2)

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: 2795066

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Inspectors

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