five rivers

turning children's lives around



Impact report

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CEO foreword

I am incredibly proud to introduce Five Rivers' 2026 Impact Report.

Our purpose, 'turning children'slLives around', is simple to say, but it carries an enormous responsibility. Behind every statistic in this report is a child or young person with their own story, strengths, experiences and aspirations. Our responsibility is not simply to provide services, but to create the conditions in which children can feel safe, be heard, build trusted relationships and have the opportunity to thrive.

This report is therefore about more than what we have done during the past year. It is about what changed as a result of our work, how we know we are making a difference and what we are continuing to learn.

Across fostering, residential care, education and our clinical services, we see the greatest impact when we work together around the individual needs of a child. Our integrated approach allows us to bring care, education and therapeutic expertise together, rather than expecting children to fit around organisational structures. This is an important part of what makes Five Rivers distinctive, and something I believe has the potential to make an even greater difference in the years ahead.

Central to that approach is listening to children and young people. Their experiences must be one of the most important measures of our success. We want children not only to be safe and well supported, but to know that their views matter and that they can influence the decisions that affect their lives. As this report develops in future years, I want the voices of children and young people to become an increasingly visible part of how we understand and demonstrate our impact.

Our impact is also made possible by our people. Every single colleague within Five Rivers contributes to our purpose. Investing in their skills, wellbeing and development is not separate from improving outcomes for children. Stable, skilled, compassionate and therapeutically informed people are fundamental to achieving them.

As a social enterprise, our purpose also shapes the way we operate. Our commitment to reinvesting at least 51% of our profits enables us to invest in services, innovation, research and new approaches designed to improve outcomes for children and families. Commercial success and social purpose are not competing priorities for Five Rivers. Our success enables us to invest further in our purpose and extend the difference we can make.

I am particularly proud that our work continues to evolve through learning, research and innovation. We want Five Rivers not only to deliver high-quality services, but to contribute to the wider evidence base, share what we learn and work collaboratively with local authorities, commissioners, partners and the wider sector to improve experiences and outcomes for children.

We should also be honest that there is always more to do. This Impact Report does not simply celebrate successes, it helps us understand where we are making the greatest difference, where the evidence needs to become stronger and where children, families, colleagues and our partners tell us that we can do better. We will continue to strengthen how we measure outcomes and use evidence, learning and lived experience to shape our decisions.

This first organisation-wide Impact Report is therefore both a celebration and a commitment. It celebrates the extraordinary work taking place across Five Rivers every day, while committing us to becoming increasingly rigorous in demonstrating not only what we do, but the difference it makes.

To our children and young people, Foster Carers, families, colleagues, local authority partners, commissioners and everyone who works alongside us, thank you. The progress reflected in this report belongs to all of you.

Most importantly, we remain ambitious for every child and young person we support. Their futures are the reason Five Rivers exists and the measure by which our impact should ultimately be judged.



Nicci Willock
Chief Executive Officer
Five Rivers



key highlights from 2025-26

1,525

children Five Rivers cared for across all services

283

pupils educated across our **11** specialist education provisions.

1,201

children supported through our **15** fostering locations, with the support of **549** Foster Carers.

41

children and young people cared for within our **15** childrens homes and supported accommodation.

turning children's lives around

3

new specialist education provisions opened, strengthening our ability to meet the diverse educational needs of more children.

1

new supported accommodation opened, expanding our ability to help more young people make a successful transition to independence.

Achieved

the British Dyslexia Association's Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark, recognising excellence in inclusive education and support for children with dyslexia.

1

peer-reviewed research papers published, helping to advance understanding and shape best practice across the sector.

Achieved

Investors in People Platinum accreditation, independently validating the strength of our culture, leadership and commitment to developing our people.

19

Ofsted inspections completed, all awarded good, outstanding or equivalent.

Launched

ATIC® F as part of our tiered fostering model.

Impact on children in fostering

Carers

Our Foster Carers cared for

1,201

children, providing safe, stable and nurturing homes.

75

new Foster Carers were recruited across our fostering services.

100%

of Foster Carers had access to specialist therapeutic training, helping them support children with complex needs.

Commitment to quality

5

Investing in Children Membership Award™ - Gold. Every fostering service across the Five Rivers community holds the Investing in Children Membership Award™, with five achieving Gold level this year. The award provides independent recognition that children and young people are listened to, involved in decisions that affect them, and can see their views leading to meaningful change.

100%

of our fostering services were rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

Ofsted inspectors at Safehouses Fostering highlighted children's strong sense of belonging, long-term stability and the way their voices help shape both their own lives and the service.

> "A genuine family feel."

> "Children are encouraged to develop skills essential for adult life."

> "Children are accepted for who they are, and their achievements are celebrated."



35
children achieved permanence through a Special Guardianship Order or adoption.

68
children safely returned home to their families.

20
young people successfully moved on to independent living.

64%
of placements ended in a planned way, supporting positive and stable transitions for children and young people.

34
Staying Put arrangements began, helping young people maintain trusted relationships as they transitioned to adulthood.

22
parent and child placements remained together as a family.

100%
of children in fostering had access to therapeutic support.

98%
of children said they are happy in their foster home, with 92% saying they feel heard and taken seriously.

8
young people progressed to supported lodgings, developing skills and confidence for adulthood.

77%
of children showed improvement across wellbeing measures.

Clinical Services

Launched our tiered fostering approach, including ATIC® F, improving outcomes for children and reducing placement breakdowns.

100%
of children, had access to therapeutic support.

12
children and carers receiving ATIC® F support.

337
approved families and **87** current staff trained

276
ATIC® F Assessments have been processed to support understanding of the needs of children.

> **"I have learned highly effective approaches for caring for my foster child who has experienced trauma, abuse and neglect. I have been able to understand the reasons behind my child's behaviour rather than just the behaviour itself."**

Impact on children in residential

Following last year's opening of our first supported accommodation, Clara House, we have continued to establish and develop this provision. We recognise the importance of supporting young people as they transition from care into adulthood, providing a safe and stable place to live while helping them build practical skills, confidence and the independence they need to take their next steps in life.

> "Thriving, growing in confidence and developing trusting relationships."

Ofsted, Bourne House

Commitment to quality

100%

of children who moved on from Residential Services did so in a planned way, supporting positive and stable transitions.

100%

of homes had a registered manager in post, providing consistent leadership and stability for children.

100%

of residential staff had access to clinical support, wellbeing planning and dedicated weekly reflective practice sessions.

100%

of children were offered direct therapeutic support, helping them process experiences and build resilience.

100%

of staff received ATIC® therapeutic care training, enabling them to provide trauma-informed, relationship-based support.

100%

of homes were rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted in the most recent inspection year.

3

children moved from residential and supported accommodation into foster care, enabling them to benefit from family-based care.

41

children were cared for in our Residential Services, a **70%** increase since 2024, enabling more children to access high-quality care and support.

86%

of children in our children's homes are living in homes within their county or neighboring county.

> "The manager and responsible individual have high aspirations for children and are committed to nurturing, celebrating and championing their success."

Ofsted, Namwera House

Clinical Services

100%

of children in Residential Care have access to a therapist in a dedicated therapy space.

100%

of children underwent clinically informed assessments.

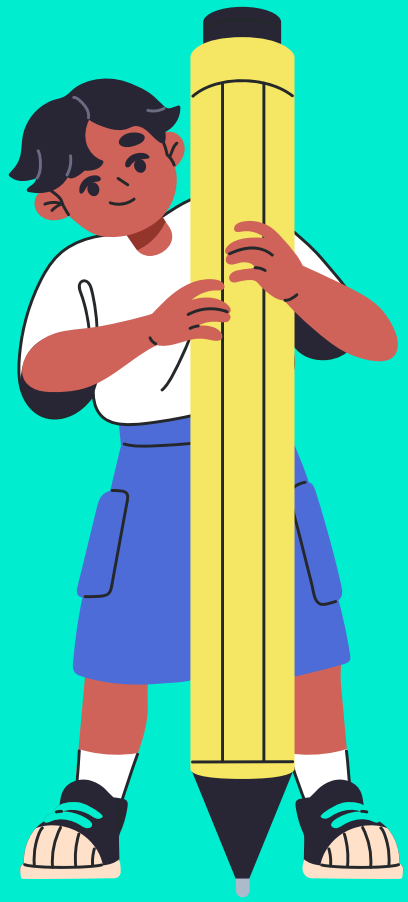
50%

of children showed improvements across wellbeing measures within 12 months.



Impact on children in education

Commitment to quality



8 schools accredited through ATSSA, 7 schools achieved Gold and 1 achieved Silver with 2 more schools beginning their Attachment and Trauma Sensitive Schools Award journey.

Received the British Dyslexia Association's Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark, recognising our commitment to inclusive education and removing barriers to learning.

Our social enterprise commitment funded Five Rivers Online School, creating new opportunities for children unable to access traditional education.

100% of our schools achieved positive Ofsted inspection outcomes.

Learning and achievement

67%

of pupils have made expected or better than expected progress in Writing.

66%

of pupils have made expected or better than expected progress in Maths.

71%

of pupils have made expected or better than expected progress in Reading.

283

pupils educated across our 11 specialist education provisions.

One young person increased their attendance from 13.6% to

95%

re-engaging with education and achieving qualifications despite significant barriers to learning.

2

unconditional university offers received by one child in our care, reflecting their hard work, ambition and the support around them.

28

commissioned children and young people accessed support through Five Rivers Online School,

> "extremely positive and, in some cases, transformative impact on attendance"
>
> Ofsted, Park House School

> "Pupils make impressive progress over time."
>
> Ofsted, Park House School

Children's voices shaping Five Rivers

237
young people responded to the 2026 consultation.

98%
happy in their foster home.

92%
feel heard and taken seriously.



12 young people created 4 animated videos explaining children's rights around data and records, giving children clearer and more accessible information about how their data is used.

Children influenced the development of Foster Carer assessor training by explaining the qualities they want in the people who care for them.

Children told us:

Adolescence can be complex and misunderstood, and adults need to better understand young people's experiences.

We listened:

We created a space to bring together 22 young people alongside three carers, a care leaver and two psychologists to develop 12 themes drawn from young people's lived experience.

We changed:

Together they co-produced Navigating the Teenage Years, a resource designed to help the adults supporting young people understand what may sit behind their experiences and behaviour.

The difference:

This resource is now informing practice and is being developed further, including plans to make it available in audio format after young people and carers said this would make it more accessible.

Step Across case study

Assessment

Harry arrived at Five Rivers after experiencing neglect, abuse and five foster placements in a month. As part of our assesment we came to understand he was highly traumatised, struggling with emotional regulation, sleep, daily routines and self-harming behaviours.

Intervention

Through a joined-up approach across fostering, residential care, education and clinical services, Five Rivers provided the therapeutic support and stability Harry needed.

Outcome

The result is a child who is safer, more settled and thriving: self-harming behaviours have reduced significantly, he is engaging in education, building healthy relationships, seeking comfort from trusted adults and can now write his own name independently.

Background information:

Harry* came into care after experiencing significant neglect, domestic abuse and sexual abuse. Before moving to a Five Rivers foster family in February 2024, he had already experienced five foster placements within a month.

When Harry arrived, he was showing the impact of deep trauma. He struggled to regulate his emotions, found everyday tasks difficult and often became highly distressed. He was not eating or sleeping well, and his Foster Carers felt increasingly concerned about how best to meet his needs.

Within the first month, his Foster Carers gave notice. However, with additional support from Five Rivers, they were able to continue caring for Harry for more than a year. During this time, he developed strong, trusting relationships with them and they remain an important part of his life today.

Initial assessment:

To keep Harry in his foster family home, Five Rivers brought together Harry's Foster Carers, Local Authority, school staff, fostering team and Clinical Services through Amber Flag and Red Flag meetings.

Despite this coordinated support, it became clear that Harry required a more therapeutic environment alongside specialist intervention. There were concerns about his emotional wellbeing, self-regulation, toilet training and ability to process traumatic experiences. Harry was displaying self-harming behaviours and harmful sexualised behaviours, and when distressed would often hurt himself by hitting himself or banging his head. The fostering and Clinical Services teams agreed that a more specialist therapeutic environment would provide the support he needed to thrive.

Aims:

Our aims for Harry were to:

- Improve his emotional wellbeing and resilience.
- Help him develop secure, trusting relationships.
- Support access to education.
- Enable a future return to foster care or, where appropriate, reunification with his mother.

Recommendations:

Following assessment and planning with Harry's Foster Carers, Local Authority, fostering team and Fountain House, the professionals agreed together that Fountain House could provide the specialist support he needed.

A carefully planned two-week transition helped Harry build familiarity, trust and confidence before moving. Fountain House carers visited him in his foster home, arranged video calls, supported visits to Fountain House and spent time understanding his routines and preferences. Harry also stayed overnight, allowing him to become familiar with the home before moving in permanently.

Harry moved into Fountain House on day 12 of the transition plan, which was a positive experience for Harry

Outcome:

Harry settled well into Fountain House and quickly built trusting relationships with the adults around him. He engaged positively in weekly Play Therapy and began attending Fountain House School, where tailored educational support helped him re-engage with learning. One of Harry's most significant achievements has been in literacy. Although he previously struggled to recognise words, including his own name, he can now write his name independently.

Harry's emotional wellbeing has also improved significantly. Self-harming behaviours have reduced, and he is now more likely to seek comfort and support from trusted adults. He has made positive progress with toilet training and is developing greater confidence socially, forming friendships and building healthier relationships with his peers.



**Childs name has been changed.* ***The RAG meetings depend on how settled the placement is, Red being at risk of placement breakdown, Green being settled.*

Impact on employees

The quality of care, education and support children receive depends on the people around them. By investing in colleagues' skills, development and progression, and creating a culture where people feel valued and supported, we build knowledgeable, motivated and more stable teams. For children, that means greater consistency, stronger relationships and experienced people who have the skills and confidence to respond to their individual needs.

257

nominations were submitted for our Values Awards, recognising colleagues who consistently live our values and make a difference every day.

17%

Our workforce grew by 32 colleagues, increasing our capacity to support more children, young people and families.

65

colleagues were promoted internally, demonstrating our commitment to developing talent from within.

77%

staff retention helped provide continuity, stability and expertise across our services.

23

colleagues successfully completed professional qualifications, strengthening capability across the organisation.

125

colleagues progressed their careers through promotions, role changes or salary progression opportunities.

> **"I started here with no previous experience and was given all the information I needed, had a buddy to support me and now I am working towards my Level 3 qualification."**



> **"What's so nice here is that it's about making it a great place for staff as well as the children we care for."**



> **"I have completed two qualifications, been promoted and feel so happy in my role."**



> **"Five Rivers Childcare have truly invested in me, and I am extremely grateful for the continued support shown in my leadership role."**



Staff story

What qualifications and training have you done since being at Five Rivers?

I completed my Level 3 Apprenticeship in Residential Child Care, and my Level 5 in Management. I've been a Registered Manager for two years now, and I continue to learn and grow every day. I like being better today than I was yesterday.

What drew you to work at Five Rivers?

I started as a Residential Child Care Worker because I wanted to continue to work with children and the community. The job sounded interesting, and I liked the shift pattern.

At the time, I didn't realise how different Five Rivers was compared to other children's home providers, but now I see that our children don't want for anything. We have the services and resources to really support them.

Do you have any standout moments?

Leading my home to a 'Good' Ofsted rating was a huge highlight for me and something I worked incredibly hard for.

When I initially became a manager, I had only three very new staff members, and previously the home had used carers from an agency. We were caring for two children with complex lives. It was the beginning of a challenging journey to achieve a 'Good' rating, and my first task was to guide us through that storm. We recruited, upskilled, and worked incredibly hard to now have a 6% turnover in the last 12 months. Earning a 'Good' rating required dedication and teamwork at every level, and I'm immensely proud of the collective effort that got us there. I now have a full team of qualified, experienced, passionate carers who are the best at what they do.

I have a platform at the next inspection to ensure we can achieve an 'Outstanding' rating.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

The work ethic here. People go out of their way to help one another, supporting each other and stepping forward when needed. The culture is strong and continually improving, with more exceptional individuals being developed, promoted, or joining the organisation. Job satisfaction is immense, and there are numerous opportunities for growth and development.

I'm grateful for the support I've had. I have future training lined up to support children leaving care, and I plan to train as a ProActive Approaches trainer (the ProActive Approaches course is mandatory training for staff working with children at Five Rivers).

I'm proud to work in a culture where contributions are noticed and appreciated. Recognition isn't just a word; it's something we do well here.

What excites you most about Five Rivers' mission?

We can turn these children's lives around because we have the tools to do that. I've got the freedom and flexibility to do what's best for the children and my team. Honestly, it doesn't feel like a job; these children are my children while they're living in the home, and I look after them as I would my own.



Dan's story is a testament to resilience, growth, and the power of a strong team culture. His journey shows what's possible when passion meets opportunity.

Impact on the community

4

properties have solar panels and batteries.

32

new job roles created.

689

employees.

120

local businesses used.

working in partnership with

170

Local Authorities to turn children's lives around.

1

peer-reviewed research paper published, contributing insight and evidence to the wider sector, helping to inform practice, strengthen therapeutic approaches and improve outcomes for children



Research that influences practice

What we did

Research explored children's behaviour alongside their emotional experiences and perceptions of relationships.

What we learned

Challenging behaviour can communicate underlying trauma, emotional distress and children's expectations of adults.

Why it matters

Understanding what sits beneath behaviour helps adults respond through relationships, consistency and trauma-informed support rather than seeing behaviour in isolation.

Wider impact

By publishing our findings, learning generated through Five Rivers can contribute to knowledge and practice beyond our own services.

We published one piece of research this year, but our commitment doesn't stop there. Through our social enterprise reinvestment, we continue to invest in research that strengthens our practice and helps improve outcomes for children and young people. We are committed to publishing more peer-reviewed research, sharing what we learn so it can make a difference not only across the Five Rivers community, but across the wider sector too.

We are currently offering researchers the opportunity to work in collaboration with us, working in partnership with University of Lincoln, Anna Freud Centre and University College London to explore what improves outcomes for children in care.



Social enterprise

As a social enterprise, we reinvest at least **51%** of our profits into services, innovation and initiatives that improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

In the financial year 2025-2026, this is what our social enterprise reinvestment funded.

Supported accomodation

What we invested in: Growing our supported accommodation provision, opening Nadder House alongside Clara House.

What this has helped make possible: More young people can have a supported transition towards independence, with a safe and supportive place to live while they build practical skills, confidence and prepare for adulthood.

Five Rivers Online School

What we invested in: Creating Five Rivers Online School, accredited by the Department for Education as an online education provider.

What this has helped make possible: 28 children and young people were able to access education through an alternative to traditional provision, creating another route into learning for those who need it.

Clinical support in fostering

What we invested in: Providing clinical support to fostering families beyond statutory requirements, including additional targeted support through ATIC® F.

What this has helped make possible: Every child in fostering had access to therapeutic support, helping foster carers better understand and respond to children's individual needs.

Investing in better spaces

What we invested in: Continuing to improve our homes and schools, enhancing the environments where children and young people live and learn.

What this has helped make possible: Welcoming, well-designed spaces that support children and young people to feel at home, engage in their education and thrive.

River Valley and Sky Vale Schools

What we invested in: Opening River Valley and Sky Vale, growing our specialist education provision.

What this has helped make possible: More children and young people can access specialist education shaped around their individual needs, with the support they need to engage, learn and make progress.

Clinical Services research and development

What we invested in: Research and development to continue strengthening our therapeutic approaches and evidence-informed practice.

What this has helped make possible: New learning that can inform how we support children and young people, while contributing to wider understanding and practice through peer-reviewed published research.

