

To the Moon and Back Foster Care Limited

To the Moon and Back Foster Care Limited
Future Business Centre Kings Hedges Road, Cambridge CB4 2HY
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

To the Moon and Back was registered in September 2017. It is a small, independent agency, and the office is based in Cambridge. To the Moon and Back provides long-term, short-term and emergency placements. The agency currently has two approved fostering households with one child in placement.

Inspection dates: 10 to 11 September 2018

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 **good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: This is the first inspection.

Overall judgement at last inspection: N/A

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Carers identify and are able to meet children's individual needs.
- Work undertaken by the agency and the carers reduces risks to children.
- Placement matching is careful, considered and completed in partnership with the foster carers.
- Practice is innovative and child-centred. Children are at the heart of all decision-making.
- The agency's statement of purpose is embedded throughout its work.
- Foster carers describe strong support from the agency.
- Children form good relationships with their carers.
- Children develop interests and hobbies and have positive, family-based experiences.
- The agency has a strong focus on keeping children safe.
- Carers value the support which they get from the agency.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Children's views are not sought to develop the service.
- There are family members who have not received training in safer caring.
- Not all assessments regarding the sharing of rooms are recorded.
- The agency has not sought outstanding paperwork from placing authorities in a timely manner.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that the wishes, feelings and views of children and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring foster carers and developing the fostering service. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 1.7)
- Ensure that the fostering service follows up with the responsible authority where all such necessary information has not been provided by the authority. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 3.9) This relates to the fostering agency obtaining paperwork in a timely manner from the responsible authority following looked after children reviews and meetings.
- Ensure that the decision-making process and outcome of the assessment are recorded in writing where bedroom sharing is agreed. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 10.6)
- Ensure that appropriate training on safer caring is provided for all members of the foster household, including young people if sufficient age and understanding, and ensures that foster carers understand how safer caring principles should be applied in a way which meets the needs of individual children. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 20.9)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The registered manager and the responsible individual are the company directors. As they are the only current permanent staff, they undertake responsibility for the recruitment of foster carers, Form F assessments, carers' support and administration tasks. Due to the limited operational time, the foster carers' annual reviews and unannounced visits could not be demonstrated. There is a commitment to fully embed the values and objectives from the statement of purpose into the day-to-day operation of the agency.

There is a child-centred approach. This focus ensures that the agency's foster carers provide positive experiences for the child currently placed. This helps this child to make good progress.

Placement requests from local authorities are considered carefully. Good placement matching results in the child's needs being successfully met. As a result, the child's behaviour improves, he makes positive progress in education and benefits from positive life and leisure experiences. The child, who has had limited experiences, now enjoys the outdoors and experienced his first holiday abroad via aeroplane. The carers have produced meaningful, engaging profiles for children, which will enable them to have some information prior to moving.

Prospective foster carers receive realistic information about the fostering role. Several visits and informative conversations ensure that both the agency and carers understand and share the same expectations. One carer said, 'They gave me information and answered our initial questions. I liked their approach over the phone. We found them to be very thorough and liked what they offered. They are compassionate about the children we are having into our home and looking after us.' This helps to ensure that carers are prepared for any difficulties. Therefore, there is less likelihood of placement breakdowns for children.

The child is registered with primary healthcare services and receives support to understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. A more active lifestyle and healthy eating have led to notable progress in the child's health. This supports the child's emotional well-being and resilience.

The carers support the child to have positive and regular contact with his family. On occasion, when the placing authority arrangements to support contact have fallen through, the carers have immediately supervised the contact. This ensures that the child can have the contact with his family which meets his individual needs.

Carers are very positive about the support they receive. Supervision sessions delivered by the manager are reflective and informative.

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

Carers receive safeguarding training. They are confident and prepared to deal with safeguarding incidents. This increases the safeguards and protects the children. There have been no allegations or complaints made about the care the child receives.

Carers help the child to take age-appropriate risks, so that he learns how to keep himself safe. This includes supporting the child in safe internet use. They have put strong, clear boundaries in place to help the child to develop positive behaviour, using effective consequences, and praise positive achievements. The child is developing strategies to begin to self-manage his behaviour and make positive choices.

Carers have a good understanding of the child's needs. They spend quality time with the child, understanding his need to know specific details about upcoming events and important dates. This reduces the likelihood of incidents. However, there is a lack of risk assessments to identify potential risks and how these risks can be reduced. The child was initially placed in an emergency with a sibling who has since moved placement. However, no assessment was completed to demonstrate the decision-making or identify potential risks. This does not ensure that all possible action is taken to reduce the risk to children.

Due to the size of the agency, there are no support groups established. The agency does ensure that the carers have access to self-help groups via the internet. There is minimal impact from this shortfall due to the short time the agency has been operating and the level of effective support provided by both the directors.

An effective foster panel looks at the suitability of carers to provide good, safe care for children. The foster panel can operate independently and the panel chair, who is very experienced in social care and fostering, reported that assessments are good, as they are succinct and analytical. A carer reported that she found the panel to be 'reassuring and professional but not as if you were on trial'. This demonstrates a robust and thorough process. Minutes from panel meetings show that all members of the panel have the opportunity to raise questions on the assessment presented. They help the agency decision maker to reach balanced decisions. The panel is reflective and, along with the agency decision maker, offers purposeful quality assurance. This approach helps the agency to approve carers who are motivated to foster to help children to achieve.

Due to the short length of operation, there have not been any foster carer annual reviews or unannounced visits. The agency is clear of the requirements of these areas and has the resources and infrastructure to ensure that this happens.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is a very experienced social worker and manager. The manager and responsible individual share a wealth of knowledge in fostering. The manager has completed her level 5 qualification in leadership and management since registration.

The responsible individual and registered manager complement each other due to their differing strengths and abilities. Due to the size of the agency, and their experiences, they are very knowledgeable understanding of the children, carers and development of the service. This is supported through an effective quality assurance process providing an oversight of the quality of work. However, this process has not sought the views of children on how they would consider improving the service.

The statement of purpose informs foster carers, placing authorities and other interested parties of the services and support the agency will provide. The directors are passionate about the agency's values, and these are at the centre of their work. Additional children's guides are available to suit different age ranges and ensure that children are provided with a document appropriate to their age and understanding, to inform them of the services they should receive.

The directors are developing their network, both locally and around areas where carers are based, to build the support for carers when the need arises. This enables them to keep up to date with key developments, current research and practice. They are professionally curious and question other agencies to satisfy themselves as to the benefits of working with other agencies in supporting carers.

The agency has not recruited any supervising social workers, due to the low number of foster carers. There are clear plans in place to recruit as the agency expands. The manager receives professional independent supervision. This enables her to have time to reflect on her practice and identify further professional development.

Carers spoke positively of the support they receive. One carer reported that the agency had delivered everything that they had offered to them at the start of the process. The carers spoke highly of the training they have received and are in the process of completing their training and development standards. While the agency has conducted verbal discussions with the families, not all members of the fostering household, including children, where appropriate, have received training on safer caring. The agency's conferences provide dedicated time for external speakers to come to the service and share their knowledge in areas such as child sexual exploitation. This provides an opportunity to network and share ideas and information to support and help children.

Carers' records relating to the child are purposeful. They provide the child, placing authority and the agency with meaningful information of the child's day. These records demonstrate the child's progress and experience. Photographic memorabilia and a certificate recognising his first flight in an aeroplane, will ensure that the child has memories of the time with his carers. However, the carer does not have all the information from the placing authority that they need, such as a personal education plan. While the manager has requested these records from the placing authority, the lack of a timely follow up means that these have not been received. This could delay educational support for children.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the independent fostering agency knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: 1259274

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Registered provider address: 7 St John Street, Mansfield NG18 1QH

Responsible individual: Angela Hunt

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Inspector

Natalie Burton: social care inspector



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