

Moments

Moments Fostering Limited

Moments Fostering Ltd, Main Office, Pean Hill Park, Pean Hill, Whitstable, Kent CT5 3BJ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Moments is a privately owned independent fostering agency based in Whitstable, Kent. It has recently been purchased by the Compass Fostering Group.

At the point of this inspection, there were 89 approved foster carers with 52 separate fostering households offering 65 placements. The service provides emergency, short-, medium- and long-term, and permanent foster placements for children and young people. Other services include bridging or pre-adoption, parent-and-child and respite placements.

Inspection dates: 20 to 24 November 2017

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: 28 November 2014

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- The agency offers the children and young people welcoming placements with suitable carers who are committed to them and understand their needs.
- The manager is able to evidence that children and young people make progress in their lives and have good experiences with all those attached to the agency.
- The efforts of the agency to obtain and act on the views of the children and young people was previously weak but has recently started to improve.
- Education and health needs of children and young people are met to a high standard by carers. The recent addition of an education support officer and access to a clinical psychologist to support carers has been welcomed.
- The development of age-appropriate skills has led to some young people becoming fully independent.
- The quality of care provided by foster carers during their first year is formally reviewed at six months and 12 months.
- The children and young people are kept safe by the agency. Missing from care, child sexual exploitation and many other safeguarding concerns are rare occurrences.
- The agency safe recruitment practices have significantly improved since the last inspection.
- The panel is an effective gatekeeper for the agency that scrutinises assessments effectively and makes sound recommendations for approval.
- A new manager has been registered and is already proving effective in monitoring the service and engaging purposefully with all attached to the agency.
- The supervising social workers have small caseloads and they are fully supported in their duties.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- There remains further work to gather and use children and young people's views fully.
- The training and support that carers receive does not meet all of their expectations or needs.

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

Recommendations

- The fostering service ensures that foster carers understand the nature and level of support that will be provided to them by the fostering service. (NMS 21.2)
- 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. (NMS 1.7)
- Where a child goes missing and there is a concern for their welfare, or at the request of a child who has been missing, the fostering service arranges a meeting in private between the child and the responsible authority to consider the reasons for their going missing. The fostering service considers with the responsible authority and foster carer what action should be taken to prevent the child going missing in future. Any concerns arising about the foster carer or the placement are addressed, as far as is possible, in conjunction with the responsible authority. (NMS 5.9)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children and young people have made progress while developing appropriate relationships with their carers and the agency staff. The majority have positive experiences being placed with welcoming carers who understand their individual needs and aspirations.

The small agency provides a family atmosphere that helps the children and young people feel welcome. The matching process is sound, resulting in placements which are stable. The children and young people settle quickly due to being fully accepted by their carers and their biological children.

In the last eight months, the manager has started to pursue the views of the children and young people through surveys and direct conversations with the staff during planned outings. Unfortunately, the previous management team was lacklustre in its efforts, leaving a significant period where the voices of children and young people were not actively taken or acted upon. Neither did the previous management team influence agency practice.

The carers, with the support of the agency, meet the children and young people's health needs to a good standard. Carers take the time to develop an awareness regarding all health concerns that require specialised care. Good-quality engagement with health professionals enables carers to talk through the medical needs with the children and young people so that they understand the purpose of certain appointments.

Many of the children and young people are in mainstream or alternative educational provisions, with regular attendance achieved at the encouragement of carers. Some children and young people making significant progress in education, even those with previous histories of not engaging. The agency is now in a position to offer professional advice to carers in complicated matters with the recent addition of education support officers.

Achievable goals are set for the children and young people, which develops their independence. Their placements provide age-appropriate opportunities for them to develop skills essential for adulthood. Some young people have become fully independent with positive views of their carers' and the agency's contribution to their lives.

The agency consistently reviews the quality of care that newly approved carers provide. Panel reviews care arrangements informally after six months, allowing the agency to address any difficulties and identify support needed early in carers' fostering careers. This process and the support offered have led to carers feeling confident in their abilities.

The carers' spoken to on inspection had mixed views regarding the training and

support received from the agency. Some carers consider online training to be ineffective and that it does not develop their practice. They also felt that previous managers kept them in the dark about the pending changes, while being unsupportive and slow to respond to some out-of-hours emergencies and challenges in placement. This issue has not prevented the carers from providing the best possible care for the children and young people. Managers have agreed to meet with carers in the future to review the support and training available.

The children and young people are able to maintain family attachments that are safe and appropriate. The carers monitor and support contact arrangements considered by professionals to be in their best interest. The children and young people have benefited from knowing that their loved ones support their care arrangements by the positive relationships that they may also have with carers.

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

The children and young people are kept safe by the agency. There has been only a low number of significant events and safeguarding concerns in the three-year period since the last inspection. Consistent advice and guidance is available to the staff and carers in relation to all child protection matters. Links with the designated officer have been established for referencing when needed.

Safeguarding training is available to the carers and the staff, which keeps their knowledge up to date on current trends. The training matrix reflected that missing from care, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and radicalisation are courses that have been provided and completed by carers and the staff.

A well-organised process assists the agency in addressing practice deemed unacceptable by carers. When the care being provided is not in the best interest of children and young people, the placing authority is notified and efforts are made to resolve the concerns. On one occasion, the agency appropriately de-registered a carer based on their lack of acknowledgment and engagement. The process involved presenting the case to panel for consultation while providing opportunities for the carer to express a contrary view.

The agency does not experience a high number of children and young people who go missing or are exposed to child sexual exploitation. There are fewer than 10 incidents of going missing on record. One each occasion, carers correctly adhered to the agency's missing from care protocol. Upon returning to placement, return home interviews were not arranged, and this prevented the agency from extracting the maximum learning from the incidents.

The foster carers are aware of the risks associated with the children and young people placed with them. When necessary, the carers utilise their trusting relationships and behaviour management strategies to defuse concerning situations prior to escalation. Essential documents such as risk assessments, safe care plans and positive handling plans are in place for reference and guidance on practice.

The previous requirement in relation to recruitment has been met. Several files

reviewed for newly appointed staff revealed that the agency practised safer recruitment. The administrator quality assures all information before offers are made. This includes ensuring that the disclosure and barring service information is received and clear, and all references are verified for concerns.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leadership and management at the agency has changed significantly over the past year. In August this year, the agency was acquired by a larger registered fostering organisation. The previous board of directors is no longer in place with a new management team leading the succession plan that will see the agency have a change in name and registration in due course.

The manager has been in post since March and has recently completed his registration as manager. His experience consists of being a registered manager of a children's home as well as an experienced foster carer. The manager is well liked by the staff. His hands-on approach, including engaging directly with carers by visiting their homes, has been well received.

An experienced development manager is tutoring the manager in his duties through a detailed month-by-month plan of transition. Some carers and the staff are experiencing some anxiety over the future of the agency. This has not affected their ability to perform their duties and responsibilities towards the children and young people. The senior management team has provided information sessions for the staff and carers to address any concerns or questions they may have.

The manager has taken the time to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the agency. The annual reporting, based on the manager's audit of the service, offers strategies for improvement and development. This is evidenced from the solid business and development plan highlighting areas of action by order of importance.

A strength of the agency is its panel. The various perspectives and knowledge that the panel members display was observed on inspection. The panel chair ensures that each member is prepared with appropriate questions based on the assessments of new and experienced carers. The agency decision maker scrutinises panel minutes and considers their recommendations and the reasons for them before signing off the minutes.

The staff are of the view that they are receiving ample support from the managers. The staff have small caseloads, which provides them with the time to address the needs of each placement assigned. Supervision has been purposeful due to the manager taking the time to prepare and familiarise himself prior to discussions.

The statement of purpose has recently been updated to reflect the recent and ongoing changes with the agency. The agency has a good presence on social media with a website and Facebook page which are easily accessible by members of the public.

The managers accepted the recommendations made from this inspection. They

agreed that the areas referenced were in need of improvement.

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, 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: SC036518

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Inspectors

James Harmon, social care inspector

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