

Attachments Fostering Limited

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The Cedars, Holborough Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5PL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Attachments Fostering Ltd is an independent fostering agency, based in Snodland, Kent. Qualified, permanent staff are employed and the agency also uses a regular bank of qualified independent social workers for additional assessment and review work. The agency has its own established fostering panel, chaired by an independent person.

The agency currently has 11 approved fostering households supporting 10 children and young people, situated across a small area within the Kent region. Services offered include emergency, short-term and bridging placements, long-term and parent and child placements.

Inspection dates: 12 to 16 March 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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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	requires improvement to be good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 23 June 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 children and young people live in stable placements, and are matched with carers who can support their needs.
- Foster carers are committed to the children and young people; they treat them with respect and accept them into their wider families.
- The support provided to foster carers prevents placements from breaking down during difficult circumstances.
- The children and young people value education and have good health.
- Structured independence planning allows children and young people to obtain age-appropriate skills for adulthood.
- The agency safeguards the children and young people effectively. There are a small number incidents of safeguarding reported by the agency.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- The registered manager and responsible individual lack the necessary support and guidance to develop in their roles.
- On one occasion, the agency decision-maker did not make an informed decision following a panel.
- Foster carers who provide parent and child placements have not received training specifically designated to support these placements.

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
Ensure foster carers are provided with such training as appears necessary in the interest of children placed with them. (Regulation 17 (1))	06/06/2018
This is in particular relation to parent and child placements.	

Recommendations

- Ensure that the fostering service provider's decision-maker makes a considered decision that takes account of all the information available to them, including the recommendation of the fostering panel and, where applicable, the independent review panel, within seven working days of receipt of the recommendation and final set of panel minutes. (NMS 14.9)
- Ensure that suitable arrangements exist for professional supervision of the agency's registered person or manager of a local authority fostering service. (NMS 24.3)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

A small number of foster carers have been recruited by the agency, providing children and young people with stable and safe placements. They are matched with committed foster carers who are able to meet their everyday needs. The children and young people have their placements planned in advance. The pre-arranged introductions and meetings help them to settle and become quickly accustomed to care arrangements.

The children and young people develop positive attachments with their foster carers. Their wishes and feelings are known and acted on when appropriate. They develop trust in their carers while feeling accepted into the wider family. The carers are actively involved in the day-to-day planning and have encouraged children and young people to progress. Some young people are able to remain with their carers long-term in staying put arrangements.

The young people who are seeking asylum receive a high level of support. They are provided with opportunities to help them adapt to living in a new country. The young people are assisted in securing legal representation, learning a new language and supported to overcome the issues that brought them to the United Kingdom.

The children and young people make progress in their educational attainment. They have aspirations for higher learning as is evident from those successfully attending college. The foster carers and staff attend meetings with education professionals, enabling the children's and young people's progress to be monitored.

The children and young people experience good health. They have current health assessments on file to guide their needs. Their health and well-being are promoted well and monitored by their carers. They are registered with health professionals and supported by carers to attend all routine and emergency appointments.

All children and young people are encouraged to develop age-appropriate independence skills. The areas that need to be developed are guided by a structured assessment of their skills. Many young people have obtained skills that have enabled them to successfully obtain employment and manage their finances.

The process for becoming a foster carer is very thorough. The agency completes informative assessments of potential applicants. After approval, foster carers feel appreciated by the agency. They have a professional relationship with the agency and receive good support. The training is well received by the carers, providing them with the skills to care for the children and young people. They receive consistent feedback and acknowledgement of their practice in supervision and annual reviews.

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

The children and young people are safe and well protected by the agency. Child protection training is routinely supplied to the staff and carers, thus ensuring that they have sufficient knowledge. In case of emergency, the agency after-hours on-call system provides guidance to carers by a member of the staff familiar with the children and young people. Carers believe that the system allows them to manage all situations at times of uncertainty.

There have been only a low number of significant incidents, and these were properly reported by the agency. The concerns for the children and young people are obtained and explored pre-placement. Historical information is verified, ensuring that it is factual and relevant, allowing carers to be prepared for potential negative behaviours.

The risk assessment and safe-care plans are comprehensive and individualised. Information on the children and young people is presented in a clear format that helps carers fully understand the level of risk and how to manage it. The documents are regularly reviewed in carers' supervision for accuracy and to ensure a shared understanding of behaviours displayed.

There is a strong response to missing from care incidents. The very few incidents which occurred were handled well by the agency. In each instance, young people returned safely to their placement with the reason for their actions explored, risk assessments updated and advice provided to the carer.

The agency is proactive against radicalisation. The responsible individual visited a mosque that young people were interested in attending and will offer a personal view on any risk. This directs young people effectively to avoid networks or events that it may not be in their best interest to join.

The agency has a robust response to allegations against carers. The agency proactively works with professionals to ensure that children and young people are protected while the matter is being investigated. When allegations are unfounded, the agency provides the carer with support to assist them with overcoming the anxiety associated with these matters.

The agency takes concerns for carers' practice seriously. The agency proactively provides foster carers with opportunities to resolve practice-related issues prior to taking firm action. When standard of care concerns are raised formally, this results in an independent review and its findings are presented to the panel for a recommendation on the continued suitability or support required for the carer.

New members of the staff are safely recruited. Safe recruitment procedures are followed, with background information scrutinised and verified.

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

The leadership and management lack appropriate support and guidance in their roles. The registered manager has been in post since starting the agency. A new responsible individual was appointed two years ago. They both have no suitable, formal arrangements for supervision or to monitor their performance. For example, the registered manager acts as the agency decision-maker and on one occasion failed to make an informed decision based on information available and the views of the fostering panel in a timely manner.

The agency currently has two parent and child placements. The process for becoming a carer in this category is weak. The carers have not received any specialised training prior to placements commencing. They are not appropriately equipped with the tools required to document their observations, although these may be needed for court assessments.

Managers of the agency track effectively the progress that children and young people make. A daily meeting is held at the start of each morning to discuss out-of-hours incidents and assigning tasks for follow-up. The size of the agency allows weekly team meetings to be held in which young people, carers and agency business are discussed. This has enabled managers' and staff's knowledge of the children, young people and carers to remain current.

The monitoring of the agency is sound. The children, young people, carers and staff are involved in the development of the service, each providing an important perspective when reviewing the service in its entirety. The quality and performance information is promptly submitted to Ofsted annually.

The staff speak highly of the support they receive in relation to their assigned roles within the agency. The agency has one experienced supervising social worker assigned to the carers and a social work assistant as an additional resource. They are both committed to their roles, and have considerable knowledge of the children, young people and carers.

The managers display a high level of professionalism when addressing complaints. Complaints are acknowledged promptly and complainants receive a full written reply. The managers may attempt to resolve matters with complainants, whom they make sure feel that they have been listened to. If this does not resolve matters, an independent person is appointed for an unbiased view.

The panel is committed to safe and reliable placements for children and young people. It is chaired by an experienced foster carer. The panel is represented well by knowledgeable professionals familiar with foster care.

The aims and objectives of the agency are presented clearly in an easy-to-access document. The agency is adhering to the ethos outlined in the statement of purpose. The children's guide available is age-appropriate and offers guidance to children on their rights and expectations.

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: SC061808

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Registered provider address: 24 Downsview, Chatham, Kent ME5 0AP

Responsible individual: Osman Koca

Registered manager: Dorothy King

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Email address: attachments@btconnect.com

Inspector

James Harmon, social care inspector



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