

To The Moon And Back Foster Care Limited

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Future Business Centre, Kings Hedges Road, Cambridge CB4 2HY

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency registered in 2017. The office is located in Cambridge. The agency supports foster families living in Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had 30 approved foster carers in 18 households. The agency currently provides care and support for 18 children living with foster carers. The agency provides emergency, short-term and permanent foster care arrangements.

The manager registered in September 2017.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 3 to 7 October 2022

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: 10 September 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children thrive from their individual starting points and make steady progress in all areas of their lives. All children are in education. Foster carers go above and beyond to help children attend school or college. Access to laptops supports children with their studies. Successful working relationships with teachers and tutors help children to invest in their futures. This support encourages children to work towards their potential.

The managers, supervising social workers and foster carers work well together to advocate for children. This ensures that decisions made by other professionals remain central to children's individual needs. Good care and considered decisions have transformed some children's lives.

Children are integrated into the carers' family homes. Several children live permanently with their foster families. One young person is preparing to 'stay put'. Some carers said, 'Our foster child is part of our family.' The nurture and acceptance from foster carers help the children to blossom and begin to recover from past trauma.

A therapeutic approach is widely used across this small agency. This helps foster families to empathise with and support children when they are working through difficult emotions. This approach helps foster families to find meaningful solutions to reduce children's anxieties, which improves children's mental health and well-being. For example, one foster carer purchased worry bracelets to help children acknowledge and talk about their feelings.

Children's physical health improves as a result of living with their foster carers. All children benefit from taking part in a range of healthy and fun activities, such as swimming, football and kick-boxing. Holidays and day trips provide children with new experiences. Foster carers ensure that children attend all routine and specialist health appointments.

Some children are placed in foster care with their brothers and sisters. Other children are supported to spend quality time with their families. Foster carers and supervising social workers invest time in helping children to understand their background and identity. They strive to help children maintain good connections with their parents and grandparents, exceeding local authority expectations.

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

Children said that they feel safe and well cared for. The good implementation of bespoke care planning ensures that children receive high levels of individualised support.

Incidents of children going missing from home are rare. Children who are at risk of self-harm receive appropriate support, helping them to feel safe. The concerns reduce because children quickly receive help and support from trusted adults. Following any unplanned endings, the agency reflects on the child's experience of living with the foster family.

Managers investigate complaints and seek to identify meaningful and child-centred solutions. The managers' investigations result in actions to improve practice. Any allegations of concern in regard to foster carers are appropriately shared with the children's local authorities and professionals. However, on one occasion the agency did not refer an allegation to the host local authority designated officer (LADO). This does not ensure that all professionals maintain an overview of the agency's safeguarding practice.

The foster panel provides good levels of scrutiny and effective challenge to foster carers. Appropriate background checks are completed for prospective foster carers and their children. The foster panel chair has significant experience and maintains high standards for the foster carer assessment process. Independent foster panel members include those with direct experience of social care, and this brings a focus to children's experiences. The agency decision-maker's rationale for approving foster carers is clearly documented and discussed with individual foster carers.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the managers and supervising social workers ensured good levels of contact and communication with foster carers and children. Face-to-face visits from supervising social workers have fully resumed and include creative ways to spend meaningful time with all children in the household. This ensures that the voice of the child in care and the voice of the foster carer's children are both heard.

Annual reviews ensure foster carers' continued suitability. Supervising social workers complete health and safety risk assessments to ensure that foster homes provide a safe environment. However, reviews of the foster carers' health and safety risk assessments are not of a consistently good standard.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The responsible individual and the registered manager founded the agency. They work tirelessly at the heart of the service, sharing their vision for children with the foster carers, the staff team and panel members. They shape and influence the children's experiences. They readily seek feedback and the views of those involved in the agency. This approach drives improvement.

Foster carers and supervising social workers speak highly of the registered manager and responsible individual's care in placing children's needs at the centre of daily activity. Careful growth, matched with small caseloads, has ensured that the needs of all children remain central to decision-making.

Staff and panel member recruitment is thorough. Regular supervision and annual appraisal include seeking feedback from foster carers.

Regular audits are carried out. These prompt actions that include reminding supervising social workers and managers to request children's missing documentation from local authorities. However, audits of foster carers' files do not consistently result in timely actions. This has caused repeated requests to some foster carers for information. Foster carers have access to regular training. However, their professional development plans do not bring together areas for individual development. This reduces the opportunities to offer support and challenge to foster carers.

Experienced permanent and independent supervising social workers provide foster carers with regular supervision. They are in frequent contact with the foster carers and their families, including out of office hours. During COVID-19 restrictions, the managers met regularly with foster carers through virtual meetings. Since then, face-to-face meetings and support groups have been re-established. This promotes inclusion and upholds the agency's values.

The managers seek bespoke advice from other agencies when needed. This is to offer extra help to children with complex social behaviours. The agency partners with specialist providers to ensure that foster carers and supervising social workers access relevant and up-to-date information about specific models of practice.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the foster home is maintained to a good standard and is in good order throughout, and that outdoor spaces that are part of the premises are safe, secure and well maintained. In particular, ensure that health and safety risk assessments are consistently reviewed, and any actions are discussed with foster families and implemented. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 10.2)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers' personal development plans set out how they will be supported to undertake ongoing training and development that is appropriate to their development needs and experience. In particular, include personal development plans in the annual review. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.5)
- The registered person should ensure that allegations against people who work with children or members of the fostering household are reported by the fostering service to the LADO. This includes allegations that, on the face of it, may appear relatively insignificant or that have also been reported directly to the police or Children and Family Services. In particular, ensure that the LADO for the host local authority is notified. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 22.6)
- The registered person should ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Ensure that immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. In particular, consistently action shortfalls identified from audits of written records. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.2)

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: 1259274

Registered provider: To The Moon And Back Foster Care Limited

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

Responsible individual: Angela Hunt

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Inspector

Rosie Davie, Social Care Inspector

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