

Compass Fostering (West)

Compass Fostering West Limited

Unit G1, New Venture House, Venture Business Park, Worcester WR2 4AY

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Compass Fostering (West) is a private limited company operating as an independent fostering agency. It offers a number of different types of placements for children and young people: emergency, short-term, long-term, parent and child, and permanent placements. At the time of the inspection, the service has 148 carers who care for 113 children and young people.

Inspection dates: 8 to 17 April 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 18 January 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Foster carers and children said that the support provided by the agency exceeds their expectations. The support of the agency means that foster carers are highly confident and skilled to enable children to live in stable placements, where they flourish physically, emotionally and socially. One child said that the best thing about being in foster care is being loved.

Children thrive educationally. Some children go on to further education that is in line with their wishes and hopes for their future careers.

Children can stay with their foster carers beyond their 18th birthdays. This gives children a sense of security and permanence. It also provides them with important support throughout their further education and in developing essential life skills ready for independence.

Children receive booklets that give them information about their potential foster carers, their family and their homes. The agency also has online profiles for foster carers. These can be viewed on smartphones or other internet devices so that children can have easier access to this information when they move in emergencies or at short notice. Where possible, children visit the prospective carers' homes and have the opportunity to interview the carers prior to their placement being confirmed. This helps children to play a key role in the decision-making process and to know that their views and feelings matter.

The agency makes sure that children's views and experience stay at the heart of the decision-making process. For example, one child made a request for her brother to live with her. The agency staff and the foster carer supported her to make her feelings known to the right professionals. The child and her brother are now happily living together.

The good relationships that some foster carers have with children's parents help the foster carers to understand and meet the children's cultural needs. Additionally, these relationships help the children to understand why they cannot live with their parents, even though their parents continue to care about them. This is significant as it helps the children to settle in their foster homes without feeling disloyal to their parents.

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

Excellent support for children helps them to become safer and calmer and to feel more secure in their foster placements. The agency staff and foster carers use comprehensive individualised risk assessments to help them keep children safe.

The agency ensures that children have access to specialist services such as mental health and sexual health services. This support often makes a significant difference to children's emotional well-being.

Supervising social workers see their children regularly. One child said that the supervising social workers are always there for them when they need them. A placing social worker said that the children they have placed with the agency are happy and settled and have excellent relationships with the foster carers. The quality of these relationships with foster carers and agency staff is a significant factor in protecting children.

The agency works closely with placing social workers and designated officers when there are safeguarding concerns. This effective joint working and the strong focus on children's safety help to protect children who are placed with the agency.

The assessments of prospective foster carers are thorough and include clear analysis. They help to make sure that only suitable people are approved as foster carers. There are second opinion visits to prospective foster carers as an additional safeguard. In one isolated case, the agency did not receive a historic local authority check in addition to the one for the area in which the prospective carers lived at the time of assessment. While this represents a shortfall, the impact on the child is reduced due to the strong overall assessment process.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is an extremely skilled professional who ensures that the agency is well managed. Agency staff, foster carers, children and other professionals all speak highly of the registered manager.

The registered manager provides a high-level service that enables children to do well. He systematically monitors and evaluates the agency's work through feedback from children, families and professionals and by using research-based practice. This helps to create a culture of review and improvement so that the care that children receive is of a very high standard.

Complaints are dealt with very well and result in clear learning points to further improve the service.

Records of staff supervision show that the supervisions are reflective and used to discuss children and foster carers. The records of annual appraisals of staff are detailed and help to identify training needs.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that the written report on the person's suitability to be approved as a foster carer sets out clearly all the information that the fostering panel and decision maker need in order to make an objective approval decision. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 13.7)

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: SC360525

Registered provider: Compass Fostering West Limited

Registered provider address: Mountfields House, Off Squirrel Way, Epinal Way,
Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3GE

Responsible individual: Kathryn Swift

Registered manager: Nicholas Dunster

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Inspectors

Tracey Coglan Greig: social care inspector

Gareth Leckey: social care inspector

Kristen Judd: social care inspector

Clive Lucas: social care inspector



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