

Compass Fostering South

Compass Fostering South Limited

Unimer House, Dominion Way, Rustington, Littlehampton, West Sussex BN16 3HQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Compass Fostering South Limited is an independent fostering agency. The head office is based in Rustington, West Sussex, with additional office premises in Fareham in Hampshire and Hastings in East Sussex. The agency is one of seven branches of Compass Fostering Services, which is part of Compass Community, a private limited company.

Compass Fostering South provides short breaks, short-term, long-term, emergency, and parent and child foster placements. At the time of this inspection, the agency supported 234 households caring for 220 children and young people.

Inspection dates: 11 to 15 November 2019

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: 26 February 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 experience good-quality care through the nurturing approach of foster carers. The agency's therapeutic approach to care is evident in the relationships that children have with their carers. Children feel understood and valued for who they are. They also feel that their carers know them well and respond empathically in relation to their earlier childhood experiences. Children benefit from close relationships with the foster family, including birth children. The agency supports this by providing joint activities. Foster carers make every effort to support children to spend time with their birth family where possible.

Overall, children make good progress due to the support of their foster carers and the support provided by the agency as a whole. Education is promoted and supported by a specialist education team within the agency. They help supervising social workers to develop their knowledge, and together, advocate for children to access education. Therapeutic practitioners provide help to children and foster carers where additional support may be needed. The increased involvement of the therapeutic practitioners is a recent development in the service. This is having a positive impact and is helping to embed a therapeutic approach across the whole agency.

Children are enabled to share their views and feel well understood by both their carers and the agency staff. Children's views, wishes and feelings are sought through creative workshops which help to influence practice to inform future service development. This is evident in the way the agency involves children in the induction process for new foster carers. This in turn helps children to develop their emotional literacy and to share how they are feeling. Children's engagement is beginning to help improve carers' understanding of the lived experience of children. There are good examples of advocacy support having been provided to children.

Carers provide individual support and care to meet children's specific needs. Children and their carers feel well supported by their supervising social workers, which is a real strength of the agency. Professionals describe constructive working relationships with the agency and value the effective support provided by supervising social workers. Placement stability is a key focus for the agency from the point of referral. The inspectors found good examples of extra support and interventions being put in place by the agency to prevent placements breaking down. Close partnership work with the organisation's residential services is helping the agency to develop alternative packages of care for children with more complex needs and who may struggle to cope in a foster family setting.

There is a diverse pool of foster carers available to meet children's individual needs. Newly approved foster carers feel that the assessment process helps prepare them for their role. They appreciate the helpful peer support provided by fellow foster carers through the buddying system. The agency provides a good range of training and learning opportunities to enable carers to undertake their role and to improve

practice. Foster carers feel well prepared through the in-depth induction programme provided by the agency. However, not all foster carers are provided with all relevant training prior to an individual child being placed. The agency has recently sourced local training to enable all carers to access core training more easily. While carers receive regular supervision, there is inconsistency in the quality of supervision records .

The agency fostering panel is led by an experienced panel chair. The panel closely scrutinises the written assessments for prospective foster carers. Panel members fully explore all relevant issues in order to inform their recommendations about an applicant's suitability to foster. The panel provides constructive feedback and challenge to the agency when necessary. The agency decision-maker also provides constructive feedback and challenge to the panel when necessary. The agency's independent reviewing officers have effective oversight in relation to foster carers' practice and their ongoing suitability for the role. These three elements combine to ensure that the quality of assessments, the professional standards of the agency and the quality of care provided to children are good.

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

Individual care plans demonstrate that children's needs are well understood. These plans identify known vulnerabilities and outline risk management plans and appropriate strategies to help keep children safe. The needs of each child are appropriately identified and used to match children with suitable foster families. Children's care plans are regularly discussed and reviewed as part of the agency social work supervisions with foster carers. The agency provides extra support and resources when this is necessary to ensure that children have the best chance of success.

Foster carers feel well supported by both their supervising social worker and through the out-of-hours support provided by the agency. Operation managers are available to provide effective out-of-hours support to supervising social workers. This system helps carers to provide safe and responsive care to meet the needs of children in their care. This also means that operations managers have a good understanding of some of the challenges foster carers face when looking after vulnerable children.

Safe recruitment practice is followed by the agency. The registered manager appropriately reviewed recruitment practice, in collaboration with the organisation's human resources team, when improvements were identified. Where concerns are identified in relation to an allegation or complaint, the agency responds promptly and consults appropriately with the designated officer for safeguarding. The agency has good partnership working with statutory agencies, including children's services and the police. This helps to contribute to safeguarding children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has a strong ethical value-based vision for the quality of care provided, which is reflected overall in the agency's culture. They have an accurate assessment of the agency's strengths and areas for development. However,

systems for recording this do not provide a clear assessment of the impact of the quality of care provided. This is important, as some of the positive work being undertaken is not fully captured or reflected in written records.

There have been positive developments through the therapeutic training and support provided to carers. Another positive example is the collaborative work being developed with the residential service around placement choice.

Operation managers provide effective support to supervising social workers, with a clear focus on children's progress and outcomes. They receive supervision on a regular basis. However, records of these meetings do not demonstrate reflective practice. This reduces the ability of managers to have a clear understanding of supervising social worker practice and to identify any gaps in learning or training needs.

There is an effective training programme in place for supervising social workers. This includes contextualised safeguarding as well as specific post-qualifying professional courses.

Child-centred decision-making, coupled with a strong approach to advocacy, is evident in the leadership and management of the agency. This includes the operation managers through to the registered manager and the senior leadership team. The therapeutic model underpinning the agency's approach is threaded through all aspects of the service, from recruitment through to support for agency staff and foster carers.

The registered manager feels well supported by the senior leadership team. There is appropriate monitoring and oversight in place by the responsible individual, who maintains regular contact with the registered manager.

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
The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. (Regulation 17(1))	31/01/2020
The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them— receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 21(4)(a))	31/01/2020
The registered person must maintain a system for— monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. (Regulation 35(1)(a)(b))	31/01/2020

Recommendations

- Each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker who has meetings with the foster carer, including at least one unannounced visit a year. Meetings have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and offer support and a framework to assess the carer's performance and develop their competencies and skills. The frequency of meetings for short break foster carers should be proportionate to the amount of care provided. Foster carers' files include records of supervisory meetings. (NMS 21.8)

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: SC465949

Registered provider: Compass Fostering South Limited

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

Responsible individual: Bernadine Gibson

Registered manager: Sally Harper

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Inspectors

Maria Lonergan, Social Care Inspector
Amanda Harvey, Social Care Inspector
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