

Compass Fostering Eastern Limited

Main Office, Pean Hill Park, Pean Hill, Whitstable, Kent CT5 3BJ
Monitoring visit
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency has its head office in Whitstable, and there are additional offices situated in Gravesend and Felsted. The agency provides emergency, short-, medium-, long-term, and permanent foster placements for children and young people. Other services include bridging or pre-adoption, parent-and-child and respite placements.

At the time of this inspection, 177 fostering households comprising 307 approved foster carers were looking after 188 children and young people.

The manager was registered with Ofsted on 20 December 2017.

Inspection date: 19 to 20 August 2020

Date of previous inspection: 17 February 2020

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken following the last full inspection when the independent fostering agency was judged inadequate. There were eight requirements made at the last inspection, and this visit was undertaken to assess the progress made in relation to each of the regulatory breaches identified.

The requirements made were in respect of regulation 4 (a), regulation 8 (1)(a)(b), regulation 11 (1)(a), regulation 15 (1)(2)(d), regulation 17 (1), regulation 19 (a)(b), regulation 21 (1)(a) and regulation 35 (1)(a)(b).

Regulation 4 (a)

The agency's statement of purpose now reflects the specific service they provide. Children's guides are child centred and age appropriate. Three new guides are now available to meet children's differing needs. This requirement is met.

Regulation 8 (1)(a)(b)

There has been improved oversight of the service by the senior leadership team through an increase in the frequency of supervision provided to the registered manager. The agency response to two complaints made by foster carers has been appropriate. When responding to two separate allegations against foster carers, the registered manager worked effectively with statutory agencies and carried out thorough investigations. Both investigations concluded with proportionate responses, which demonstrated child-centred decision-making and promoted each child's welfare. This requirement is met.

Regulation 11 (1)(a)

The staff team has been provided with good-quality training in order to develop skills in the assessment of risk. However, this learning is not yet fully embedded into practice, and staff guidance in relation to assessing risks was not followed in respect of one child. There was an example of an improved understanding of identified risks for another child. However, in respect of a further two children, the risks and up-to-date strategies to mitigate these were not recorded in the placement plans for each child. This included a safeguarding incident which, together with three unrelated significant events, had not been notified to Ofsted. There was insufficient evidence that a supervising social worker consulted with a child when this was an agreed strategy. This requirement is not met.

Regulation 15 (1)(2)(d)

The support plan in relation to meeting one child's health needs has improved following the last inspection. The identified needs of another child were not reflected in the risk management plan. There was no record of the child receiving specialist mental health support. The child's placement ended due to the presenting risks to the foster carer following a significant incident. Medication training was undertaken by one foster carer. However, this was not completed by both foster carers. This was of particular concern, due to the child's health needs and identified risks. This requirement is not met.

Regulation 17 (1)

Matching for one child with complex needs did not ensure that the foster carer was able to provide the appropriate care needed. As a new foster carer, they did not have the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to meet the child's needs. The placement ended after two days, due to the presenting risks related to the child's known vulnerabilities. The registered manager's review of this placement breakdown acknowledged that the matching decision was based on the foster carer undertaking training once the child was in placement. The foster carer's learning included training in understanding child sexual exploitation and challenging behaviour.

The matching of children with foster carers was identified as an area for improvement by foster carers and supervising social workers. The registered manager and senior leadership team have, in consultation with staff and foster carers, undertaken a review of the matching process. This has resulted in positive changes. The new placement matching process has not yet been implemented, and it is therefore not possible to evaluate the impact of this. This requirement is not met.

Regulation 19 (a)(b)

Recruitment of new staff with suitable skills, knowledge and experience is evident. The continued focus on recruitment has ensured increased sufficiency in staffing. Vetting of new staff meets safer recruitment practice. This requirement is met.

Regulation 21 (1)(a)

Staff have been provided with good-quality written induction plans. The learning needs of staff, in the context of their professional skills and knowledge, are fully explored during induction. Supervision for new staff is effective and is provided regularly. This requirement is met.

Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b)

The oversight from the senior leadership team of agency practice has increased following the last inspection. They understand what needs to improve, and the responsible individual has allocated additional resources to improve practice.

The registered manager maintains regular oversight of the operational management of the agency through utilising a number of different monitoring tools. One example of effective management monitoring noted by the inspector was where the registered manager effectively identified the improvements to safeguarding practice needed. However, gaps remain in relation to management monitoring and oversight of the quality of care provided by the agency. This requirement is not met.

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
<p>The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that— the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (1)(a))</p>	30/09/2020
<p>The fostering service provider must promote the health and development of children placed with foster parents.</p> <p>In particular, the fostering service provider must ensure that each child— is provided with guidance, support and advice on health, personal care and health promotion issues appropriate to the child’s needs and wishes. (Regulation 15 (1)(2)(d))</p>	30/09/2020
<p>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))</p>	30/09/2020
<p>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))</p>	30/09/2020
<p>If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 36 (1))</p>	30/09/2020

Information about this inspection

In accordance with Ofsted guidance on COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions, this inspection was undertaken remotely. Telephone discussions were held with the registered manager and responsible individual during the inspection. Various documents were shared with inspectors that were also considered. The inspectors had telephone conversations with a small number of foster carers and several members of staff including those in the senior management team.

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the independent fostering agency since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC036518

Registered provider: Compass Fostering Eastern Limited

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

Responsible individual: Bernadine Gibson

Registered manager: Wayne Ross

Inspectors

Maria Lonergan, social care inspector
Stephen Collett, social care inspector

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