

# Compass Fostering South East

Compass Fostering South Limited

Pean Hill Park, Pean Hill, Whitstable, Kent CT5 3BJ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency registered with Ofsted in March 2021. The manager registered with Ofsted on 22 March 2021.

Foster carers provide long-term, respite and permanent care placements. The fostering service also provides placements for children with disabilities, as well as parent and child placements. The fostering service provides care that is based on a therapeutic approach. At the time of this inspection, there were 70 approved fostering households, providing care for a total of 79 children.

### Inspection dates: 10 to 14 January 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:** N/A

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** N/A

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** N/A

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children are looked after by carers who confidently provide care that is individualised to the needs of each child. Carers are well supported by competent supervising social workers and this helps them to meet the varied and diverse needs of the children in their care. Because of this, children flourish and make good progress.

The quality of the relationships between foster carers and the professionals who care for the children is good. Reviews of care plans are within timescales and foster carers support children contribute to these meetings. Social workers and other professionals reported positive interactions with the agency, and one was particularly complimentary of their use of carer ambassadors to support children's time with their families.

Foster carers are well prepared for caring for children. The training offered to carers meets the needs of children in their care. The support that carers receive from their supervising social workers is regular and consistent. Children experience well-planned moves into and out of fostering households. The therapeutic and holistic way that staff and carers are trained means that well-informed plans to guide thoughtful interventions with children are in place.

Children have a range of opportunities to express their views about the care that they receive. Supervising social workers visit carers every month and spend time with children to hear their views. The agency is responsive to children's wishes and feelings and advocate for them appropriately. Because of this, children are engaged and feel valued.

Children have positive experiences at this agency. They are treated as children first and, as a result, opportunities to have fun and socialise are wide ranging. Foster carers encourage children to take part in activities that keep them fit and healthy. This includes involvement in sports and making healthy food choices. Children feel part of the family.

Foster carers prepare children for their future. They encourage and support children in post-16 education such as college and apprenticeships. Plans to move on are managed sensitively and children are involved at every stage. Children can remain with their foster carers beyond the age of 18 when it is in their best interests for this to happen.

Prospective foster carers are prepared well. The agency ensures that each newly approved carer has a 'buddy' or 'mentor' and this provides opportunities to learn. The quality of the fostering panel is a particular strength of this agency. The therapeutic ethos of the agency which is well embedded in agency practice and this is reflected in the quality of assessments that the panel consider to inform their recommendations with regard to foster carers' suitability for the role.

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

Carers receive training in several formats to ensure that they understand how to keep children safe. Carers receive training on what to do when a child goes missing. Incidents of children going missing are generally low. However, foster carers know what to do and take effective action when children are missing or absent from their foster placements.

Carers are well prepared and supported to manage behaviours and situations that might challenge them. Carers receive training in behaviour management and implement boundaries that help children to feel increasingly safe. Children said that they feel safe and that they know who to tell if they do not.

Staff know what to do and who to inform if they are concerned about a child's welfare. The agency has a strong commitment to keeping children safe and this is reflected in the training provided to staff and carers. Procedures are clear and this means that notifications of any incidents are made promptly. Effective safety plans are put in place and closely followed by staff and carers.

Children's needs are well understood by supervising social workers and foster carers. Risk assessments are updated as required and children are involved in this process. However, the risk assessment of one child did not clearly indicate recent risk of allegations and the possible influence of family and friends. This was a missed opportunity to share important information with future carers for this child.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The registered manager has made a positive impact on this agency. She is ambitious in her vision for children and has high expectations about what they can achieve. Additionally, leaders and managers have high expectations of staff and how they support foster carers. As a result, children receive care from foster carers who are confident in their role. Foster carers say that they feel well supported and are excited about the continued progress of the agency.

Leaders and managers prioritise the needs of children. Children are at the centre of all the work that is done and, because of this, children make good progress. The therapeutic principles used within the agency help them to think about what children need to succeed. The framework used to review this informs matching and creates stability in the home.

Leaders and managers ensure that there is good supervision practice in this agency. Staff receive regular and reflective supervision. Professional development is addressed and any training needs supported. As a result, staff feel able to discuss their needs. The training on offer to staff and carers is diverse and is provided in several formats; this means that opportunities are available to access regular training. Where carers need specific support, staff receive the training to provide this.

Leaders and managers advocate strongly for children to ensure that all agencies work effectively in partnership to support and protect children. In one example, the manager escalated her concerns appropriately to senior personnel within a local authority. This helped focus the professional network to work more effectively in partnership to keep a child safe.

Leaders and managers actively promote equality and diversity. Staff and foster carers receive training to maintain a continued awareness of difference and the impact of unconscious bias. As a result, children feel safe to speak openly about their life with regard to their identity and culture.

Leaders and managers know and understand the agency's strengths and areas for development. They take action to prevent shortfalls, and this includes in staff performance. However, the quality of notifications to Ofsted of incidents is inconsistent and sometimes contains inaccurate information. This information is critical for the regulator to understand exactly what has occurred and how it has been managed.

Managerial monitoring is effective. However, an example was found where shortfalls in foster carer logs have not been successfully addressed within a reasonable timeframe. Although no detrimental impact was evident on the young people, this is a missed opportunity to provide them with accurate records of their time with the foster family.

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

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service have a good knowledge and experience of law and practice relating to looked after children. Specifically, the logs that foster carers provide should contain clear information about the child's day-to-day life. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 17.1, page 34)
- The registered person should ensure that a system is in place to notify, within 24 hours, persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events in accordance with regulation 36. The system includes what to do where a notifiable event arises at the weekend. In particular, ensure that the quality of these notifications include accurate information on those involved. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 29.1, page 57)
- The registered person should ensure that it implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. Specifically ensure that risks are clear and appropriately shared to ensure the safety of all. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 4.5, page 14)

### **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:** 2600900

**Registered provider:** Compass Fostering South Limited

**Registered provider address:** 3 Rayns Way, Syston, Leicester LE7 1PF

**Responsible individual:** Kathryn Swift

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## **Inspectors**

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Alphie Khumalo, Social Care Inspector

Sarah Olliver, Social Care Inspector

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