

# Compass Fostering London Limited

Compass Fostering London and Eastern Limited

135 Albany Road, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 4AQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this independent fostering agency**

Compass Fostering London Limited is a part of a larger group of independent agencies, children's homes and schools that belong to the Compass Community. The agency has been operating since 14 March 2003, although it has since gone through some significant changes.

The agency provides a full range of fostering services, including emergency, respite, bridging, short-term, long-term and parent and child placements.

The registered manager post has been vacant since 23 April 2021. An experienced and qualified interim manager applied to register with Ofsted on 26 July 2021. The registration process was delayed due to COVID-19-related matters. The interim manager resigned from her role and withdrew her application on 21 December 2021. The agency's assistant director is supporting the interim manager while she is working her notice period. The agency is actively recruiting for a permanent manager and has scheduled interviews with prospective candidates.

At the time of this inspection visit, the agency had 138 approved foster families. The agency was providing placements for 136 children.

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: 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 requires improvement to be 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:** 31 July 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

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

All six children spoken to talked positively about their experiences. Some of the comments that children made included: 'I love my mum but I want to live for ever with my carers,' and, 'I really like where I live and want to stay here. The whole family has been nice to me. I am doing nice things. I am happy.'

Effective family-finding and a welcoming admission procedure help children to settle quickly and develop a sense of belonging. The motivation, skills and resilience of foster carers lead to stability and security in children's lives. Unplanned endings are rare.

Children make very good progress across many aspects of their lives. The children's social workers said that the children were safe, that they were doing well, and, in some instances, children were thriving.

Foster carers have helped some children to transform their lives. An example of this is a child who used to be the victim of sexual exploitation while missing from care. She has stopped going missing and is reclaiming her childhood.

The agency places a great value on promoting children's education. The agency's specialist team empowers foster carers to be strong advocates for children's education. The agency reported that 33% of its children gained GCSEs in English and mathematics, in comparison with the national average of 17.5% of children in care. One child is looking forward to going to college after not being in education for many years.

The agency uses every opportunity to celebrate children's achievements. This helps children to develop confidence and a sense of accomplishment.

Foster carers help children to have healthy lifestyles and achieve better physical and mental health. Foster carers make sure that children access recreational activities and explore their talents.

Foster carers listen to children and act upon their views, wishes and feelings. One social worker gave an example of a foster carer who took a child to a football club, a day after the child said that she liked football.

Foster carers help children to maintain and develop positive relationships with their birth families and friends. For example, a foster carer carefully prepared a child for visiting their mother in prison for the first time.

## **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

Many aspects of the agency's safeguarding practices are strong and effective in promoting children's safety. However, the quality of the agency's work with regard to risk assessments and dealing with children who go missing from care requires improvement.

The staff's awareness of the local police protocol for reporting children missing from care is limited. Additionally, the risk of going missing for a young child with a recent history of going missing was not assessed at the right level. The agency does not demonstrate that the best practices are followed in relation to safeguarding children missing from care.

The risk assessments relating to asylum-seeking children do not specifically address the risk of them being trafficked and going missing. This does not demonstrate proactive safeguarding.

Children trust their foster carers. This trust helps children to feel safe and enables them to talk about adverse past experiences. For example, one child disclosed for the first time that she was forced to marry and became a mother at a very young age.

Additional therapeutic support is available to foster carers to promote the mental health, welfare and security of children. Foster carers are helped to understand the impact of trauma on children's experiences and behaviours. Foster families provide emotional warmth, non-judgmental acceptance and clear boundaries. This helps children to develop increasingly positive and safe behaviours.

The agency has thorough procedures for recruiting staff, and for approving foster carers and reviewing their approval on an annual basis. This ensures that staff and foster carers are safe to work with children in their respective roles.

The agency has an effective procedure for dealing with allegations against foster carers, concerns related to the standard of care provided and complaints. The agency works closely with the local authorities and designated safeguarding officers to safeguard children, address any issues and implement any learning.

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

The agency is managed effectively and efficiently. Leaders and managers have maintained a strong focus on children throughout many changes in personnel and the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic to society as a whole. Leaders and managers ensure that the agency meets its aims and objectives.

Leaders and managers carefully monitor children's experiences, progress and outcomes. Leaders and managers have high ambitions for children and for the

fostering service. They ensure that the children's voice is strong and shapes the development of the service.

The agency's partnership working with the professional network benefits children. Children's social workers give very positive feedback about the communication with the agency, the professionalism of staff and the skills of foster carers.

The agency benefits from being part of the Compass Community. Significant resources and expertise are pooled at a national level, such as the additional support in education, therapy, safeguarding, quality assurance and development of social work practices. This arrangement allows for cross-services leadership, support, challenge and learning.

The agency has a culture of learning and improvement. Leaders and managers analyse research findings and national statistics to draw detailed service development plans and improvement strategies. Recent initiatives include the use of more child-friendly language, better retention of staff and the strengthening of the agency's diversity, equality and inclusion. Staff talked with excitement about many opportunities for their training and professional development.

Leaders and managers made thoughtful arrangements to continue to provide a supportive environment for staff and to protect the team spirit at the time of the pandemic-related restrictions and the government's work-from-home guidance. Staff talk positively about the support that they have received from their managers and colleagues. Although supervision focuses on reflective case discussions, the agency does not clearly demonstrate the line-management oversight of the quality of the records and practice.

The fostering panel is an excellent gatekeeper for the agency. The panel chair gives regular feedback to the leaders and managers of the agency. The panel makes a strong contribution to the agency's quality assurance processes and development.

Foster carers are very positive about the agency and the quality of the support that they receive. 'Carer for carers' is an excellent initiative which ensures that prospective and new carers receive additional support at the beginning of their fostering journey. However, one new foster carer did not feel supported when an emergency placement was made a day before Christmas. Another emergency placement with the foster carer, who had returned to fostering after a long break, did not end well.

## 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—</p> <p>the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11(a))</p> <p>Specifically, the registered person must ensure that the risk assessments and safety plans relating to children missing from care and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are comprehensive, accurate and timely.</p>	1 April 2022
<p>The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a policy, which is agreed with the local police, setting out—</p> <p>the measures to be followed to prevent children placed with foster parents from going missing from their placement, and</p> <p>the procedure to be followed when a child is missing from a foster parent's home without permission. (Regulation 13 (3)(a)(b))</p> <p>Specifically, the registered person must ensure that all staff and foster carers have working knowledge and understanding of the local protocols for safeguarding children who are at risk of going missing or have gone missing.</p>	1 April 2022

### Recommendations

- The registered person should review out-of-hours support for foster carers who have children placed with them in an emergency. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 21.3)
- The registered person should improve the quality of records and evidence better management oversight of the records. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.2)

## **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:** SC033806

**Registered provider:** Compass Fostering London

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

**Responsible individual:** Kathryn Swift

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

**Telephone number:** 01708 733735 or 07720428964

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## **Inspectors**

Seka Graovac, Social Care Inspector

Jayshree Pillay, Social Care Inspector



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