

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-term, long-term, respite, emergency, permanent, sibling group and parent and child foster placements. At the time of this inspection, the agency supported 171 households caring for 204 children and young people.

Inspection dates: 19 to 23 June 2023

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: 11 November 2019

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 build trusted relationships with their foster carers. The quality of their relationships stems from strong matching early on. As a result, most children remain with their foster carers long-term.

The agency is proactive in building relationships with foster carers and children. Foster carers feel well supported by the agency. Agency staff know the children and the children can identify the staff. The quality of relationships between professionals, children and foster carers is good.

The agency provides bespoke packages of educational support to children. This promotes positive educational experiences and provides opportunities for the children to progress their learning and development. As a result, a high proportion of the agency's children attend education.

The therapeutic service in the agency provides a high level of support for the children, foster carers and staff. Individual packages are well designed and continually monitored to ensure they continue to meet children's specific needs. This helps develop the children's resilience and positive mental well-being.

The staff maintain good oversight of children's health issues. Foster carers know and understand the children's health needs. Foster carers and agency staff appropriately challenge health professionals when necessary. This ensures that the children receive the medical services that they require.

The staff in this child-focused agency consult children to drive positive change. The children's participation group is involved in many different facets of the service. Foster carers ensure that the children understand their rights and know how to make a complaint. Children have access to independent advocates.

Children are supported with their independence. Foster carers enable the children to take positive risks, while safely monitoring and supporting them. Children learn how to have independent time in the community and visit their families independently. They are able to budget and purchase items with their own bank cards. This positive approach to the development of life skills empowers the children to develop confidence and resilience.

Seven fostering hubs across the service have been in operation since November 2022. The hubs are a strong community-based agency resource connecting children and foster carers. As a result, support is available to fostering families who may otherwise have felt isolated. The friendships the children make within these hubs promote safer and more reflective care. This supports the children's stability in their fostering family.

Staff's careful attention to the children's presenting needs means that children are matched with suitable foster families. However, foster carers are not always provided with all the relevant training needed to meet the child's specific needs. This gap in knowledge may limit foster carers' understanding of individual risks and their ability to provide appropriate care.

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

Staff attend mandatory weekly reflective safeguarding workshops. Safeguarding practice is regularly monitored by senior leaders. This adds an additional layer of scrutiny and oversight, to identify any areas for development. Consequently, a strong safeguarding culture is embedded in the agency.

Safer recruitment is thorough and ensures only safe adults with the relevant experience are employed by the agency. The staff are recruited from diverse personal and professional backgrounds. They join the team with a variety of experience and skills.

There is good oversight of safeguarding practice. Staff notify relevant professionals of all significant incidents. When safeguarding concerns occur, foster carers and the agency respond effectively. However, their actions and outcomes are not always recorded in detail by the agency. Professionals say they are confident in the agency's safeguarding practice.

Guidance in children's individual safer care plans regarding the use of CCTV is not sufficiently detailed. There were shortfalls identified in one instance where a review of CCTV had not been carried out since its use was implemented. An agreement for the use of CCTV did not cover all the cameras set up in the home. The failure to monitor and review the use of CCTV regularly has the potential to impact on children's rights to privacy.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has been in post since January 2022 and has the relevant experience to carry out her role.

The registered manager is passionate about the fostering agency and strives to ensure that agency staff and foster carers secure the best outcomes for children. She knows the agency's strengths and areas for development well. She is accessible and approachable to children, foster carers and the staff team. She has embedded a child-focused culture across the agency, where there is high ambition for children.

Foster carers feel well supported by the agency staff. They have a direct link to the senior management team and say that anything raised is responded to. This makes them feel valued and listened to.

The staff team feel well supported by the registered manager. Staff supervisions and appraisals are well recorded and indicate areas for development, transferrable skills and actions for future development. Staff morale is largely positive.

The diverse panel is effective. The chair and agency decision-maker have the relevant experience for these roles. The overarching theme is that the agency listens and takes on board feedback to improve practice.

Information management in the agency needs improvement. There is systematic inconsistency in the standard of record-keeping, varying from brief to very detailed records. Without consistent recording, it is difficult to monitor practice and progress. Children's information is not always uploaded to the agency's management recording system. The lack of up-to-date, accessible and accurate information undermines foster carers' and staff's ability to understand and meet children's changing needs.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that CCTV policies and agreements in place are robust and regularly reviewed across the whole agency. This is to ensure that foster carers respect the child's privacy and confidentiality, in a manner that is consistent with good parenting. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 3.5)
- The registered person should ensure that staff document when they follow up with local authorities to actively request missing placement documentation relevant to each child. This is to enable the foster carer to provide a safe and caring environment that meets the child's needs and enables them to keep the child, other children in the fostering household and the foster carer themselves safe. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 15.2)
- The registered person should ensure that support and training are made available to foster carers, including hard to reach carers, to assist them in meeting the specific needs of the children they are caring for or are expected to care for. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.8)
- The registered person should ensure that staff, volunteers, panel members and fostering households understand the nature of records maintained and follow the service's policy for the keeping and managing of information. There should be a system in place to ensure that documentation is maintained to a consistently of a high standard across the agency. ('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: SC465949

Registered provider: Compass Fostering South Limited

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

Responsible individual: Kathryn Swift

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Alphie Khumalo, Social Care Inspector

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector

Rebecca Fisher, Social Care Inspector (Shadow)

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