

Compass Fostering West

Compass Fostering West Limited

Unit G1, New Venture House, Venture Business Park, Worcester WR2 4AY

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Compass Fostering West provides short-term, long-term, respite, emergency, permanent, sibling groups and parent and child foster placements. At the time of this inspection, the agency supported 143 households caring for 215 children.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2020.

Inspection dates: 26 to 30 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: 8 April 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make excellent progress from their starting points because of the nurturing care they receive from their foster carers. The children have developed positive and meaningful relationships with their carers, and they are happy living with their fostering families. One child told the inspectors that their foster carer is 'amazing' and said that they love living with them. Another child informed the inspectors that her carers are the 'definition of happiness'. These positive relationships help children to feel secure.

There have been significant improvements with the care planning arrangements for children. Consultation with the children has strengthened this process and children are living with foster carers who can meet their individual needs. Furthermore, when children move to their foster carers' homes, they are provided with child-friendly information and a personalised welcome box. This supports children to understand what it means to live with a foster carer and helps them to feel welcome and valued.

Children have very stable and long-term placements, which gives them a sense of stability and permanence. In several cases, carers are caring for a child along with their brothers and sisters to enable them to continue living together.

Children can stay with their foster carers beyond their 18th birthday. A foster carer informed the inspectors that their child, who was going to university, would always have a seat around their table. This gives children a sense of security and permanence. In addition, it provides them with important support throughout their further education and in developing essential life skills in readiness for independence.

A research-based therapeutic model underpins the care and support that supervising social workers and foster carers provide to children. Foster carers and supervising social workers have regular consultations with experienced and skilled practitioners. These sessions help foster carers and the social workers in understanding children's behaviours and support them to respond in a more therapeutic way. As a result, the children experience care that helps them to build their resilience and to achieve future success.

Foster carers have high aspirations for their children. As a result, the children are provided with a multitude of opportunities, such as holidays abroad, drama club horse riding and piano lessons. During the inspection, one child was proud to show the inspectors a video of his recent performance with his band. These experiences provide the children with enjoyable opportunities to gain a sense of achievement and develop their self-esteem and confidence.

Overall, the children are making positive progress with their education. Foster carers in partnership with the agency in house educational service support children to reach their full potential, which has resulted in one child applying to university.

Furthermore, the in-house educational service offers advice and support to children who are not in education in line with their needs.

Foster carers understand and meet children's health needs. Children are supported to attend all routine and specialist health appointments. This ensures that the children receive the medical treatment that they require.

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

Children told the inspectors that they feel safe living with their foster carers. They have formed trusting relationships with them and feel that they can talk to them when needed. One child told the inspectors that they can talk to their foster carer about anything. Another child informed the inspectors that they feel that their foster carers always listen to their views.

Foster carers and supervising social workers have a good understanding of children's risks and vulnerabilities. Foster carers attend the relevant training to help them understand and respond to children safely.

When children go missing from home, the agency uses a multi-agency approach to ensure that children return home quickly and safely. The registered manager is proactive in challenging other professionals if they do not feel that they are taking risk seriously. When children return, a review of their care plan takes place. This means that children and their foster carers are provided with the opportunity to explore why they go missing from home.

When children harm themselves, foster carers and the agency take appropriate action to keep children safe. A trauma-informed approach supports exploration of the behaviour and any additional services that may be required to support the child. The agency advocates for children and ensures that they have access to the support and assessments that they need.

Foster carer assessments are detailed, thorough and evidence based. They are carried out by experienced independent social workers who ensure that all information is considered and challenged before recommendations are made. This is further enhanced by a robust quality assurance process which helps to provide clear analysis and recommendations for panel. The thoroughness of the assessments ensures that only suitable carers care for children.

Recruitment of foster carers, staff and panel members is robust. There is effective management oversight of recruitment. This helps to ensure that only safe adults provide care and support to children.

Overall, the agency responds well when children make allegations. It works in partnership with other professionals, including the local authority designated officer and social workers, to promote the welfare and safety of children. Where there are concerns, the agency has taken the matter back to panel and recommended

deregistration for fostering households. However, following an allegation, the agency did not ensure that all follow-up actions were completed in a timely manner.

Physical restraints are rare in this agency. The agency supports a therapeutic ethos, and foster carers and supervising social workers can access additional support and guidance from the agency's therapeutic practitioners. However, during the inspection, the inspectors identified a small number of children who have been physically restrained by foster carers who have not received the required training. This is not in line with the agency's own behavioural management policy and does not ensure that safe practices are in place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is an experienced and passionate registered manager in post. She is committed to creating the right environment for staff to work effectively. The team of staff are suitably experienced and qualified. They are dedicated to providing the right outcomes for children.

Supervising social workers receive regular and effective supervision. Supervision sessions are thorough and of good quality. The registered manager ensures that the supervising social workers have time to reflect on their practice and opportunities to continue to learn and develop.

Supervising social workers and the foster carers are provided with a wide range of training opportunities. The agency's therapeutic model informs the training that is provided to foster carers. This training helps the foster carers to understand how to respond in a more therapeutic way when children have been impacted by trauma. This ensures that foster carers and staff are equipped to provide the right support for children.

The fostering panel represents diversity in skills, gender and culture. There is a high level of independent members who help to provide a good level of scrutiny of the agency. The fostering panel provides a rigorous quality assurance function that ensures that there is a level of good oversight of the quality of assessments. Clear and timely decisions are given by the panel chair for the recommendations made.

The agency decision-maker makes clear, timely and reasoned decisions that demonstrate a good level of reflection and consideration of all elements of the application and approval process.

Foster carers have provided very positive feedback about the support they receive from the agency. One foster carer told the inspector that the support provided is 'fantastic', with another describing the agency as 'going above and beyond' with the support they provide. The foster carer ambassador role provides foster carers and children with an additional area of support. This peer-on-peer support provides carers with a platform to ask any questions or to share practice ideas. There is close monitoring of the support by the registered manager, who attends weekly meetings where updates and any practice concerns are shared.

The registered manager has developed positive relationships with partner agencies. This joined-up approach contributes to them achieving good outcomes. Children's social workers gave positive feedback about the communication with the agency, the professionalism of staff and the skills of foster carers.

Overall, the agency's monitoring systems are robust and effective. The registered manager has a good understanding of the agency's strengths and areas of development. Since the last inspection, the agency has re-evaluated and developed several systems to ensure that there is continuity of care and support for carers and children. However, there has been one significant but isolated incident where a lack of management oversight resulted in a child receiving care that did not meet the required standards. The agency had identified this shortfall and has taken proactive action to ensure that a similar incident is not repeated.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all foster carers receive training in positive care and control of children, including training in de-escalating problems and disputes. The fostering service should have a clear written policy on managing behaviour, which includes supporting positive behaviour, de-escalation of conflicts and discipline. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 13, paragraph 3.8)
- The registered person should ensure that a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a particular member of the fostering household, or staff member, including details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a record of any action taken, and the decisions reached, is kept on the person's confidential file. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 45, paragraph 22.7)
- The registered person should ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action should be taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 50, paragraph 25.2)
- 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 of records is consistently of a high standard across the agency. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 42, paragraph 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: SC360525

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Inspectors

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Natasha Skinner, Social Care Inspector

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