

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

This fostering agency is a part of a larger group of independent agencies, children's homes and schools that belong to the Compass Community. The fostering service was first registered with Ofsted in March 2003.

The fostering agency provides the following foster care placements to children: emergency, respite, bridging, short-term, long-term and parent and child placements. The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2023.

At the time of the inspection, the agency had 109 approved foster families, and the fostering agency was providing placements for 98 children. Eight children were spoken with during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 16 to 20 September 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 10 January 2022

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 receive individualised care that meets their needs well, and they are very well matched with their foster families. Children enjoy trusted, secure attachments with their foster families and develop a strong sense of belonging.

The agency's matching process ensure that children's identity needs are well met. Matching decisions consider children's religion, heritage, language needs and other specific needs well. Good attention is paid to the impact of children's often-traumatic journeys to the UK when seeking asylum.

Children feel loved and listened to. They have good opportunities to share their views about the care they receive. Children comment positively about the quality of care they receive from their foster families.

The agency's youth council is a forum for children to influence the shaping of the fostering agency. Recent changes as a result of the youth council's work include children receiving the agency's newsletter directly to them in the post, and some children are contributing to the recruitment of staff and foster carers. The agency has recently received the Investors in Children Award due to its effective consultation and engagement with children.

Children receive good support to live healthy lifestyles and to meet their developmental milestones. Staff and foster carers understand children's health needs and manage children's health care and treatment plans safely.

Children's learning outcomes are good, and they attend school and college very regularly. Currently, there is only one child who is not in education or employment. Two young adults are currently attending university. The agency's education team provides support and advice to staff and foster carers to ensure that children reach their full academic potential. Staff and foster carers are keen advocates for children and actively celebrate children's achievements.

Children benefit from the specialist support available to them and their foster families. This supports foster carers to develop knowledge and skills in providing safe, nurturing care. Staff, foster families, and children can access the agency's team of therapists, who provide individual sessions and support a trauma-informed approach to care. The agency's family support worker works directly with children to support their engagement and to enhance the stability of foster care placements.

Prospective foster carers contacting the agency feel valued and welcomed by staff. Foster carer assessments are of a good standard; these are comprehensive and analytical in determining whether applicants are suitable to be approved as foster carers. The agency's foster carer annual reviewing process is robust.

Children benefit from their foster families' professional and supportive relationships with the agency and their effective partnership working with external professionals. Foster carers receive excellent support that ensures that children make good progress and have positive experiences. This view is echoed in feedback from local authority social workers and some parents.

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

Children enjoy and feel safe living with their foster families. Foster carers are aware of children's individual vulnerabilities, and they are vigilant in their supervision of children. This helps to keep children safe.

Children's placements do not frequently feature issues of child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, substance misuse or radicalisation. This is also the case for self-harm and missing-from-care incidents. When these do happen, foster carers, staff and managers take appropriate action to help children to be safe. Records are appropriately detailed. This was not the case at the last inspection. Foster carers and staff work effectively with other safeguarding professionals to promote children's safety.

Risk assessments are clear about identified risks and highlight strategies that help to reduce risks. Safe care plans largely identify measures to ensure that children are safe in their fostering households. Some safety plans, for very young children, could be further strengthened by being more explicit regarding the measures required to ensure safety, such as the use of stairgates and child locks.

Managers and leaders ensure that there is effective oversight of all safeguarding issues. The management team monitors and discusses all safeguarding incidents, including any complaints and allegations, on a weekly basis. Leaders offer guidance and advice to staff and foster carers to ensure safeguarding procedures are followed and to monitor any trends and consequent learning.

Internal investigations into complaints and allegations are comprehensive and robust and are typically completed by independent social workers. These investigations are managed sensitively and keep children central to all enquiries. Foster carers who are subject to complaints or standard of care investigations receive appropriate support. Managers and staff liaise effectively with other safeguarding professionals to coordinate children's safe care.

Children's positive behaviour is promoted, and foster carers provide children with clear routines and boundaries. The agency's therapists work with some foster carers to explore how best to manage any difficulties, including behaviour management strategies. These are largely successful. This consistent support helps children to safely manage their feelings and behaviour.

The vetting and recruitment of foster carers, panel members and staff are thorough. This confirms that those working for the fostering agency are suitable to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leadership and management of the agency, in particular its monitoring systems and governance, show improvement since the agency's last inspection. However, there remain gaps in the review of some key areas of the agency's operation that require further improvement.

The registered manager is a suitably experienced and qualified social worker. The registered manager and other leaders monitor the quality of care provided to children well, and case file audits are regularly completed. Staff's case records are of a good standard and evidence the positive impact the agency's work is having on children's progress and experiences. Leaders and managers track the stability of placements and are prompt in providing additional services to support children's progress.

Most areas identified at the last inspection as needing attention have been successfully resolved. The introduction of a quality assurance process through auditing children's records has led to improvements in the quality and timeliness of foster carer's logs. However, for a very few children's records sampled, this remains an area of improvement.

Foster carers' homes are comfortable and well maintained. The agency's CCTV policy fails to sufficiently consider children's need for dignity and privacy alongside the need for foster carers to secure their property.

The agency's fostering panel operates effectively. Its membership is drawn from a range of professional backgrounds. The fostering panel undertakes clear and appropriate analysis of the work that is presented at panel meetings.

Training and development activities for staff and foster carers are excellent. They have access to a wide range of core and specialist training. Foster carers are supported to undertake bespoke training considered useful in supporting them to meet children's needs. Some experienced foster carers have completed level 3 accredited training in childcare, and some staff are completing management training programmes. Following a recent review of an unplanned placement ending, the agency has implemented strategies to ensure all new carers complete induction training before a child is placed with them.

Staff work in close collaboration with each other and say that they feel very well supported by managers. They benefit from team meetings, peer support meetings, clinical case review discussions and reflective practice meetings. Whilst the registered manager is supported in their role through various meetings and coaching sessions, their supervision record evidenced gaps in the recording of supervision for

several months. Additionally, not all staff appraisals are completed each year as expected.

Foster carers receive very regular and effective supervision that explores the needs of children, foster carers and their families. Foster carers overwhelming comment that the greatest strength of the agency is the extraordinary level of support that everyone receives. A foster carer said, 'We receive wraparound care; it's like a huge, fuzzy, warm hug.'

Managers and leaders are visible and accessible for support and guidance. Children say that they know their foster families' supervising social workers well and that they meet with them regularly. A child said of the family's supervising social worker, 'I like her very much. She's like my auntie. I call her auntie.'

The agency's pool of foster carers is steadily increasing as leaders explore new initiatives to attract potential applicants to become approved foster carers. The agency works very effectively with other professionals. There is close partnership working with children's social workers, independent reviewing officers and others. This ensures that children's identified needs are very well 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, The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them— receive appropriate supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 21 (4)(a))	1 November 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should improve the quality of records and provide better evidence of management oversight of the records. In particular, ensure that foster carers' logs are written and produced in a timely manner and that safe care plans include detailed information about home safety measures in place, especially for very young children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.2)
- The registered person should ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. In particular, that the agency's CCTV policy is revised to make clear and to consider the impact of surveillance methods to children's privacy and dignity. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.1)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers are able to evidence that the training, support and development standards have been attained within 12 months of approval. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.3)

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

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

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Inspectors

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Inspector

Amanda Burrows, Social Care Inspector

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