

# Compass Fostering (Yorkshire)

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC405567
<b>Inspection date</b>	14/03/2014
<b>Inspector</b>	Stella Henderson
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	

---

<b>Setting address</b>	Hope Park Business Park, Hope Park, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD5 8HH
------------------------	---

**Telephone number**

**Email**

**Registered person**

**Registered manager**

**Responsible individual**

**Date of last inspection**

Eden Foster Care Ltd

Joyce Edith Salmon

Bernadine Louise Gibson

11/10/2010

---

© Crown copyright 2014

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

Compass Fostering (Yorkshire) is a private company and owns a number of independent fostering agencies across the country. It provides short, medium and long term placements as well as placements for mother and baby and children with disability. The service does not provide short breaks.

The agency currently has children 74 looked after by 77 fostering households. It recruited 32 fostering households in the last year.

### The inspection judgements and what they mean

**Outstanding:** An agency demonstrating and exceeding the characteristics of a good judgement where children and young people are making significantly better progress and achieving more than was expected in all areas of their lives.

**Good:** An agency where children and young people, including those with the most complex needs, have their individual needs met and their welfare safeguarded and promoted. They make good progress and receive effective services so they achieve as well as they can in all areas of their lives.

**Requires improvement:** An agency that may be compliant with regulations and observing the national minimum standards but is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of a good judgement. It therefore requires improvement to be good. There may be failures to meet all regulations or national minimum standards but these are not widespread or serious; all children's and young people's welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

**Inadequate:** An agency where there are widespread or serious failures which result in children and young people not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

## Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome: **good**.

Children and young people benefit from being looked after by a good quality fostering agency which has recently come under new ownership. Strong leadership and a new manager have impacted positively on the service and the quality of care experienced by children and young people.

Children and young people make strong progress from their starting points and enjoy very stable and safe placement arrangements. They are very positive about their experiences of being looked after, and foster carers report they are well supported in their task.

Staff are suitably qualified and experienced. There is a strong sense of team purpose and the team works well together to ensure that a good standard of care is provided to children and young people. Systems for recruiting, assessing, approving and training foster carers are effective, efficient and responsive to need and demand.

Foster carers feel involved in the plans and decisions made about the children and young people they look after. Effective partnership working ensures children and young people are protected and have access to the services and resources to which they are entitled.

Overall this is a well-managed agency which regularly evaluates its performance. This helps it to track and respond to the emerging needs of individual children in placement and commissioning requirements. It works effectively within local authority services and with partner agencies to promote safety and good outcomes for children and young people.

One requirement and three recommendations are raised to help the provider to further improve practice. Outcomes for children and young people have not been affected by these shortfalls.

## Areas for improvement

### Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
35 (2011)	ensure that the system referred to in paragraph (1) of this regulation provides for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents and their placing authority (Regulation 35)(1)(3)	14/04/2014

### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- improve recording to more fully demonstrate that a potential match for a child with a foster carer can reasonably be expected to meet the child's assessed needs (NMS 15.1)
- ensure the board monitors the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children. This is with specific reference to quarterly reports to the

agency's management committee (NMS 25.7)(a)(b)(c)

- improve the system in place to notify, within 24 hours, persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events in accordance with regulation 36. (NMS 29.1)

## **Experiences and progress of, and outcomes for, children and young people**

Judgement outcome: **good**.

Children and young people's experiences, progress and outcomes are good. They benefit from the nurturing care and stability provided by their foster carers. This helps them to experience positive attachments which impacts favourably on all aspects of their lives. One social worker wrote to compliment the agency on the 'excellent attachment and start in life' that foster carers had provided to one young person.

Risks to children and young people's safety and well-being are minimised and managed effectively. Children and young people say that they feel very safe in their placements. They know who to turn to if they have concerns or worries, including external resources such as children's rights advocates. Their views have an impact on their day to day lives and the running of the agency. This has influenced such things as placement movement, contact arrangements and the appointment of staff to the agency.

Foster placements get off to a good start because, wherever possible, arrangements are made for children and young people to visit their foster placement before they move in. A range of age-appropriate children's guides helps them to understand how they will be looked after.

Several children and young people stay with their carers on a permanent basis either through long term fostering arrangements or adoption. Others move on to successful rehabilitation with families or independent living arrangements.

From a foundation of emotional security and safety, the overwhelming majority of children and young people enjoy success at school and are able to fulfil their academic or vocational ambitions. Opportunities for learning outside of school is strongly promoted. Consequently children and young people enjoy a very broad range of activities which promote good health and develop skills, interests and hobbies. This includes, for example, playing football, swimming, learning how to play the piano, going to brownies and cubs and being involved in a variety of 'after school' clubs.

Children and young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are promptly identified and addressed. Specific resources are provided where for those with complex needs or where more specialist health input is required. As a result children and young people experience improved health outcomes such as reaching developmental milestones, improved diet and exercise and increased emotional

resilience.

For older children, this includes support to make informed choices about healthy lifestyles, contraception, smoking and substance misuse. They are protected as far as possible and helped to manage the balance between increased responsibility for decision-making and risk-taking behaviours. This is alongside practical measures to help young people develop the skills they need for independence such as budgeting, household tasks and negotiating with other agencies.

## Quality of service

Judgement outcome: **good**.

During the agency's transition to new ownership some fostering households have been lost as the agency has increased challenges to practice and sets greater expectations. A few fostering households have also been lost due to some local authorities changing their placement policies.

Overall however the number and range of fostering households has continued to increase to meet the needs of children and young people and satisfy the requirements of commissioners and placing authorities. The recruitment strategy, although effective, continues to be under review as the agency aims to become even more responsive to local need.

The assessment of foster carers focuses on how applicants can meet the diverse needs of children and young people and provide safe care. Reports provide a balanced and evaluative narrative. This enables the panel to make recommendations based upon clear information provided to them.

The composition of fostering panel comprises a range of individuals of diverse experience, age and background. It exercises stringent scrutiny of applications to foster and provides helpful feedback for the agency on the quality of reports and other matters.

Children and young people live in very stable placements. Placement disruption is rare and the majority of endings are planned and at the instigation of the placing authority. Matching is effective but the rationale for why specific foster carers can meet the particular needs of individual children is not always clear.

The majority of foster carers have completed the recognised mandatory training and have access to a range of training opportunities. They report that they are very well supported by their supervising social workers, who act as 'critical friends' and are not afraid to constructively challenge practice.

Foster carers show insight and understanding of children and young people's needs,

identity and family histories. They clearly understand their role and responsibilities and cultivate effective collaborative links with health and education professionals and others, including parents. Foster carers report that they feel part of the 'team around the child' and that their views carry weight in care planning and review processes.

This helps foster carers to provide good quality care for children and young people, the value and impact of which is recognised by other professionals. For example, a legal representative for children was 'very impressed with the high level of care and stimulation provided' for young children. A commissioner commented that the number of children and young people who want to remain with the agency's foster carers was testimony to the quality of care provided.

Children and young people's plans are subject to evaluation by the agency and their progress and development is tracked on a continual basis. This monitoring function is assisted by direct electronic recording by foster carers on to the main system. As a result any concerns or blocks to progress can be quickly picked up by the agency and plans and interventions modified where required.

Young people say that they are treated as part of the family and young people spoke warmly about the care and support they receive from their carers. Carers demonstrate insight into young people's emotions and their vulnerabilities and as a result young people feel valued and secure.

## **Safeguarding children and young people**

Judgement outcome: **good**.

Children and young people are protected by a range of effective safeguarding practices, including a prompt response to any allegations against foster carers.

Children and young people report that they feel safe within their foster homes and can identify adults to speak to about any worries they may have. Supervising social workers develop meaningful relationships with children and young people in foster placements. They make a point of seeing them on their own, ask them about how they feel and what they need to keep them safe and well.

Young people's care plans and assessments make clear where risk is most likely and are regularly reviewed. Risk assessments highlight any vulnerabilities and are used to inform agency decisions and support carers in keeping children and young people safe. Contact with family is supported and foster carers monitor the impact arrangements on children and young people.

Foster carers are aware of the importance in supporting young people to develop and grow and to take measured risks as part of their on-going development. Clear boundaries and guidance help children and young people to behave appropriately. This helps them in their relationships at school and in the community.

Unauthorised absences and missing from home incidents are infrequent. Where this

occurs foster carers take practical measures to keep in touch and locate young people. Any incidents of young people going missing from the foster home are immediately responded to and appropriate agencies informed. These incidents, and those where young people may be at risk of sexual exploitation, are robustly monitored and reviewed.

There is robust scrutiny of prospective foster carers and safe recruitment practice. Annual health and safety checks and unannounced visits by supervising social workers also contribute to children and young people's safety.

## **Leadership and management**

Judgement outcome: **good**.

Since the last inspection the agency has been taken over by a new company and the new manager is already providing strong leadership and direction. Staff, carers and professionals report that she has already made some significant and welcome changes to policy and practice in the agency.

Successfully meeting the recommendations from the last inspection also demonstrates the manager's commitment to continuing improvement. These related to the quality of the children's guide, decision making processes and staffing levels.

The manager has a firm grasp of the current strengths of the agency and areas requiring development. She has set clear expectations for staff and carers to ensure the agency delivers high quality care for children and young people as set out in its Statement of Purpose.

The new leaders and manager have immediately addressed practice issues which have emerged during the transition to new ownership. Lessons have been learned from complaints and matters have been resolved to the satisfaction of placing authorities and commissioners. Professionals spoke positively of the way in which the agency has been quick to respond to any concerns and 'take our advice on board.'

The new manager is pro-active in establishing her relationship with commissioners and is ambitious for the agency to be more responsive to local need. The manager also sees it as her responsibility to help local authorities to get better value for money from the placements they pay for.

For example, one head of service complimented the manager on 'taking the initiative' and inviting them to meet to discuss more effective ways of using a retained remand bed. One commissioner commented that the agency is a preferred option because of, 'the speed at which they respond to requests, the location of placements and the quality of care provided.'

Supervising social workers are clear about the high standards of professional practice required by senior managers. They have the skills and the time to do a good job in



supporting foster carers and helping young people to achieve good outcomes. This is borne out by the very positive views that foster carers have of their individual support workers.

A range of monitoring mechanisms at both an individual and strategic level track progress and outcomes for children and young people. Placement stability and quality of care is also a feature of this. The detailed information available helps the agency to quickly identify where outcomes are not being achieved and to take prompt action accordingly.

However the review of the quality of service does not fully capture the views of children and young people and other stakeholders. Quarterly reporting to senior management comprises a number of separate reports. These do not fully indicate whether the board is satisfied with the outcomes being achieved for children and young people. This shortfall does not have a direct negative impact on outcomes or safety of children and young people, but it does mean that valuable ideas for improving the service may be overlooked.

The agency has not always alerted the regulator 'without delay' to notifiable events. Where these incidents have occurred, children and young people have been supported and safeguarded. However this delay undermines Ofsted's role in confirming that the agency has responded promptly and appropriately to such incidents.

## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards and to support services to improve.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of independent fostering agencies.