

# Compass Fostering North Limited

Compass Fostering North Limited  
Hope Park Business Centre, Hope Park, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD5 8HH  
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Compass Fostering North Limited is an independent fostering agency which has been registered since 2010. The service operates from a registered office in West Yorkshire, with other supporting offices in the north-east and the north-west of England. The agency offers a range of foster placements, including respite, permanent, long-term, short-term, and parent and child arrangements. At the time of this inspection, the agency had 238 fostering households who are caring for 292 children and young people.

**Inspection dates:** 19 to 23 March 2018

**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:** 14 March 2014

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Placement stability and effective care planning are helping children and young people to make sustained progress in all aspects of their development.
- Children and young people benefit from high-quality care in nurturing environments, which helps them to develop positive attachments with their carers.
- Children and young people access a wide range of positive hobbies and activities in the community that aid their social and emotional development.
- Children and young people placed with this agency achieve and thrive in their educational placements.
- Carers are provided with regular supervision, support and training to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care.
- The agency provides an effective response when children and young people exhibit risk-taking behaviour, such as going missing from their placements.
- Leaders are strong and effective. They are knowledgeable and child-centred, and demonstrate a good understanding of the service's strengths and areas of development.
- Placing authorities and other partners have provided positive feedback about the agency.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- The agency has not consistently notified Ofsted of significant and serious events in a timely manner.
- Assessments of prospective carers could be enhanced by including more detail on how the applicants intend to meet the range of needs for children and young people, as outlined in the recommendation for approval.
- The agency does not always make a clear record of risk assessment and matching considerations of children, young people and carers at the point of placement.

## 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
If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must, without delay, notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 36 (1))	01/06/2018

### Recommendations

- Ensure that the written report on the person's suitability to be approved as a foster carer sets out clearly all the information that the fostering panel and decision maker need in order to make an objective approval decision. The reports are accurate and up to date. (National Minimum Standard 13.7) In particular, detail how the prospective carers meet the considered terms of approval in the assessment report.
- Improve recording to fully demonstrate that a potential match for a child with a foster carer can reasonably be expected to meet the child's assessed needs. (National Minimum Standard 15.1)
- Ensure that the service implements a proportionate approach to risk assessments. (National Minimum Standard 4.5) In particular, ensure robust assessment of risks and that clear, individualised risk management plans are implemented and kept under review, and inform safe care practice.

## Inspection judgements

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

Children and young people are in stable and well-matched placements where they are supported by both their foster carers and the agency to thrive and flourish. Children and young people benefit from reliable and consistent care that enables them to build meaningful lifelong attachments. One young person said: 'If I had a magic wand, I would make [carer's name] my mum.' The quality and strength of positive relationships between children, young people and carers, staff and the leadership team is apparent. There are regular agency events for children and young people, carers and staff that are a supportive and sociable experience for all parties.

The agency provides consistent support and supervision to foster carers. The service demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that children and young people make good progress across all aspects of their development. The agency supports carers to ensure that children and young people achieve good health outcomes. Carers encourage children and young people to lead a healthy lifestyle. Healthy routines are established to ensure that good focus is given to diet, sleep, exercise, behaviour, emotional well-being and education. Children and young people access specialist support when needed. The agency has clinical support from a small team of psychologists who are able to offer consultation to carers. This assists the agency in managing a range of behavioural support needs, and enhances the emotional well-being of children and young people. This has been helpful in stabilising placements and supporting carers.

The agency helps foster carers to meet the educational needs of children and young people in their care. Social workers are able to demonstrate the individual progress that children and young people make. Children and young people placed with this agency exceed the national average in terms of both education attendance and attainment. There is a well-developed education team that provides support to carers to help them to advocate where necessary for the children and young people in their care. Furthermore, the agency has a member of staff dedicated to supporting carers and their young people to enable the young people to access apprenticeships and further education, which helps them to achieve economic well-being in adulthood. There is a strong commitment to offering permanence for young people, where appropriate. Some young people have remained with their foster carers beyond the age of 18 under 'staying put' arrangements. The agency has a clear policy in place to support this.

Children and young people enjoy a range of leisure activities that include horse-riding, roller skating, camping, fishing and sports. Contact with families and other important figures in children's and young people's lives is maintained and promoted. Careful matching results in secure placements that are successful in meeting the needs of children and young people. However, records in relation to matching considerations are not always completed at the point of placement. A recommendation is made to enhance this area of practice.

Assessments of foster carers are thorough and comprehensive. The process prepares carers well for the fostering task. The record of assessment could be enhanced further to include a more detailed exploration of how the carers will meet the needs of the children and young people outlined in the recommendation of approval. A recommendation is made to consider improvement in this area.

Children and young people have opportunities to provide feedback about their wishes and feelings through the annual foster carer reviews and other methods of consultation. Supervising social workers also ensure that they see children and young people regularly as part of their support visits to foster carers. The fostering service continues to develop strategies to enhance the participation of children looked after in influencing the service's approach.

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

Children and young people become increasingly safe while living with their foster carers. Children and young people are not regularly missing from their placements. Those that do go missing benefit from a well-coordinated, multi-agency response, if necessary. Incidents of challenging behaviour are well managed, and the agency applies an enhanced level of monitoring and support for carers and social workers when children or young people are displaying higher levels of risk-taking behaviour. There is evidence that this has been successful in reducing the risk of harm to children and young people. One young person, who had a history of fire-setting behaviour, was provided with meaningful intervention to demonstrate the risks associated with this behaviour. He was able to remain in placement following an enhanced level of supervision and support for carers.

Leaders evaluate unplanned endings to ensure that there is appropriate learning from incidents. The vast majority of placements are stable. Staff and carers access training on safeguarding and on enhanced topics such as internet safety and child sexual exploitation. This training is highly valued by carers. Foster carers provide stability and routine, and can identify in regular supervision sessions that they understand and manage any risks to the safety and well-being of the children and young people in their care. At the point of placement, risks are always considered and appropriate strategies to manage the risks are discussed, although a detailed record is not always made of this discussion. A recommendation is made to enhance this aspect of practice, particularly for parent and child placements.

This agency takes safeguarding seriously. Allegations or suspicion of harm raised in relation to foster carers are dealt with in a timely manner. Leaders of the agency share information with relevant stakeholders, and at the same time they source independent support for the fostering household. When further action is required, stringent review and approval mechanisms enable the agency to make clear recommendations to help ensure that children and young people live with carers who know how to keep them safe.

Unannounced visits to carers are used to ensure that quality and safety of the placement remain high. Recruitment and assessment of carers is well coordinated and households are sufficiently vetted to ensure that children and young people live

in households that are safe and secure. Carers are well prepared for the fostering task and receive input on safe-care practice in their initial training. Each placement has a safe-care policy which outlines the expectations in the home. Staff at the agency consider all the apparent risks, and have an initial planning meeting with the placing local authority, before children and young people are placed with carers. These discussions are not always recorded clearly. A recommendation is made to address this matter, in particular when a higher risk specialist placement is made, such as a parent and child arrangement.

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

The current manager is on an extended period of leave. There are appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that there is effective continued leadership of the service. The interim manager is making an application for dual registration until the return to work of the full-time manager. Leaders of this agency are knowledgeable and credible and have a very in-depth understanding of the service's strengths and areas of development. They are well respected by carers, staff, children and young people. Leaders are commercially aware but also very child centred. Leaders monitor and evaluate the service regularly.

The leadership team is learning from placement disruptions, resignations and incidents, and has a clear strategic development plan in place to drive improvement across the organisation for the benefit of the children and young people. There are a range of structures in place for staff and carers to access practice supervision and support. Staff feel that the service is well managed; carers have regular and direct forums with leaders and are able to influence the development of the organisation. The service is meeting the aims and objectives as outlined in the statement of purpose, which is published on the organisation's website and shared with placing authorities.

The service works collaboratively with placing authorities and other partners. There is a well-coordinated response to safeguarding concerns. Some significant events have not been notified to Ofsted, which does not afford the regulator sufficient oversight of safeguarding matters. The leadership team has acknowledged this shortfall and has taken measures to improve practice in this area. However, these measures have not been in place for a sufficient period of time to ensure confidence in the new mechanism. As this shortfall was identified at the last inspection, a requirement is made to ensure that practice is maintained.

The agency is committed to meeting the needs of a diverse community of carers and children, in its approach to recruitment and support. The fostering panel gives careful scrutiny to applications and reviews that are presented. Strengths and weaknesses of applicants are clearly identified, and panel members ensure that appropriate questions are put to presenting social workers and the applicants themselves. The quality assurance process of the agency's fostering panel and agency decision makers is effective. The panel provides an appropriate level of independence and is chaired by an experienced practitioner who provides assertive and effective quality assurance.

Foster carers benefit from professional and supportive relationships with the agency. Foster carers approached during the inspection reported high levels of satisfaction. Comments included: 'The support I receive from our supervising social worker is excellent. She is accessible, approachable, open and honest.' Another carer said: 'The agency puts its heart and soul into all that it does. The training is excellent and the staff ensure that foster carers have the tools and the knowledge we need to care for children.'

The agency has a varied, research-led training programme for foster carers covering a variety of core training requirements. This programme includes safeguarding, emotional coaching, attachment and first aid. Carers say that the quality of training is 'excellent' and helps them to provide the 'best care' to children and young people with complex care needs. Children and young people live with well-trained carers who promote their progress. Carers are trained in therapeutic care practices, for example mindfulness and emotional literacy. Training is accessible and ensures that carers are sufficiently skilled to meet the complex needs of children and young people. One foster carer said: 'The training is excellent.' Carers who have transferred from another agency said: 'The training is much better here.'

Staff feel well supported and have regular supervision, team meetings and regional meetings. They are given ample time to reflect on practice. The organisation invests in the workforce and provides regular workshops and staff engagement days, and brings in external expertise on relevant topics. One placing authority social worker commented: 'Communication and teamwork is a key strength of this agency.' Another said: 'It's a pleasure to work with such dedicated carers who enable and empower families.'

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the independent fostering agency knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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:** SC405567

**Registered provider:** Compass Fostering North Limited

**Registered provider address:** Compass Childrens Services, Mountfields House,  
Epinal Way, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3GE

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**Registered manager:** Joyce Salmon

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## **Inspector(s)**

Nicola Thomas, social care inspector

Ceri Evans, social care inspector





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