



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Compass Services for Children Limited

**Mountfields House
Squirrel Way
Epinal Way
Loughborough
LE11 3GE**

Lead Inspector
Sharon Treadwell

Announced Inspection
23rd, 24th and 28th February 2006 09:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Compass Services for Children Limited
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Telephone number	0870 850 1012
Fax number	0870 850 1013
Email address	admin@compasschildren.co.uk
Provider Web address	www.compasschildren.co.uk
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Compass Services for Children Limited
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Jane Greenhalgh
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

None

Date of last inspection March 21st 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Compass Children's Services was established in 1996. Since the previous inspection the company has undergone a change of status from a company limited by guarantee to a company limited by share and has relocated its Head Office from Desford to Loughborough. The agency has office accommodation in Coleshill, Birmingham, which is used for carers meetings and training sessions and as a work base for social work staff. No placement work is undertaken from this office and no information is stored on the premises.

The company provides foster carers across the Midlands region and accepts referrals from local authorities all over the country.

Compass provides for a variety of placement types: emergency, short term, respite, bridging, long term, sibling groups and is developing specialist provision in the areas of disability, parent and child assessment, including preparing reports for the court and the placement of asylum seeking children.

The agency was found during this inspection to have carers approved accordingly. Compass Children's Services is additionally able to provide education, training and transport services in negotiation with placing authorities and to undertake supervision of contact and life-story work.

Both Executive Directors are qualified Social Workers with local authority experience in both child-care and management prior to joining Compass. One of the directors has allocated responsibility for operations and the other for quality control and resource management.

The Compass Team comprises four elements: The Fostering Service comprises 9 Supervising Social Workers (7FTE), a Training and Development Officer and a part time National Vocational Qualification specialist (The Team Manager post was vacated in November 2005); The Children's Service comprises the manager, one full time level 4 Support Worker and 5 part time Support Workers (3FTE); The Education Service comprises the manager and a part time qualified teacher; The Administration Service comprises the manager and 6.5 staff (5.5 FTE) with allocated responsibilities relating to contracts, finance and general administration.

Compass provides a 24-hour support network to all it's carers and guarantees fortnightly visits to carers by the Supervising Social Worker. The Education Team provide advice and support to carers and the young people placed with them. The service has ready access to professional counselling services and is a member of the Fostering Network and has Investors in People status.

Compass was able to demonstrate during this inspection, it's continuing commitment to the principles of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

SUMMARY

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This Announced inspection was undertaken by two inspectors over three days and took 50 hours in total including pre-inspection visits, questionnaire analysis and inspection planning.

At the time of this inspection Compass is supporting 61 carers and approximately 80 placements.

For the purposes of this inspection two carers and the children placed with them were tracked through the inspection of case files, home visits and discussions with supervising Social Workers. Additional case files were examined but these carers were not visited.

During the inspection discussions were held with several members of key staff within the organisation and with both directors, one of whom is the Responsible Individual and the other the Registered Manager. One of the inspectors attended a Carers' Support Group meeting and one inspector attended a meeting of the Young People's Panel.

The inspectors are grateful to Compass staff, carers and particularly young people for their valuable contributions to the inspection process.

The inspectors would note and commend the enthusiasm and commitment with which the Education Team Manager, The Children's Services Team Manager, The Administrative Team Manager and the Training and Development Officer related developments, in their own particular areas, to the inspectors as well as providing written reports. Staff with responsibility for the development of specialist services and for the piloting of the 'Catch up' reading scheme also evidenced a high level of commitment and produced written documentation detailing work undertaken to date.

Questionnaires were returned by 34 carers, 17 children and 40 placing social workers, and these have been referred to within the body of this report.

Prior to this inspection the Registered Manager completed a Pre-Inspection Questionnaire and a Manager Self Assessment and submitted these to the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

The above information has provided the major components of inspection evidence. Policies and procedures, the agency's Statement of Purpose, the Carer's Handbook and other documentation have been fully inspected during previous inspections and were consulted only for clarification purposes on this occasion.

What the service does well:

The agency is commended on its absorption of the principles of 'Every Child Matters'. The written reports submitted by all Team Managers, detailing recent developments, were organised under the five desired outcomes for young people and training has been undertaken with carers to raise their awareness of these.

The agency is innovative in providing support systems to promote the development of young people's individuality and in promoting their educational and personal achievement.

The Children's Services Team are heavily involved in supporting young people within the Complementary Education provision as well as in delivering the Youth Achievement Award programme, which involves young people in a wide range of activities, recognising and rewarding their many achievements.

The inspectors commend the work undertaken by the agency, and particularly by the Children's Services Team, in providing a wide range of methods, forums and opportunities (both formal and informal) for consultation with young people. Young people feel confident that their opinions count.

Compass evidences a commendable commitment to the provision of training opportunities for both carers and staff.

Both carers and staff are actively involved in the development of agency policy and practice with representatives involved in a number of consultation groups.

The Directors operate a 'hands on' management style, which involves them in working closely with the staff team and carers. Several carers, in their questionnaires, commented on the importance of the annual Director's visit in making them feel valued and consulted.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The Compass Education Service is currently conducting a pilot study for 'Catch Up', a reading intervention programme aimed at enhancing young people's skills in this area.

The Children's Service Manager has gathered a list of contact details for all local authority Children's Rights Officers by identifying a website and this information is about to be provided to carers

The Children's Service has developed of its own version of 'Pathway planning' and is utilising this well to support placing authority input.

Some carers have been trained to support young people involved in the Complementary Education Programme by providing experiential learning opportunities and the agency is paying additional fostering allowance in recognition of the time devoted to this task.

The agency has developed a pro-forma risk assessment to be completed where young people are required to share a bedroom.

What they could do better:

The agency must ensure that carers (whether mainstream, respite or short-term) are provided with appropriate information to enable them to meet the child's identified care needs in all areas.

The agency should better evidence full consideration of all known information on the matching pro-forma.

The agency should ensure that carer recording in relation to health provides a full written health record, which is updated during placement and moves with the child.

Where young people are identified as needing or specifically requesting life story work, the agency should evidence consultation with the placing authority to support these young people in obtaining it.

The agency should better evidence that support provided to carers is in accordance with policy and procedural guidance. Currently records are not appropriately reflective of the 'excellent support' that carers claim they receive.

The agency needs to review/revise its policy and practice in relation to medical consent to ensure that health outcomes for young people are positive.

Where exemptions to the usual fostering limit are in place the agency must be able to evidence the agreement of the local authority in which the carer lives.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

Standard 12.

Although the agency has clear policy and procedural guidance for staff and carers, supported by pro-forma recording tools, there is insufficient evidence that young people's health needs are always being appropriately met.

EVIDENCE:

All Compass carers are required to undertake paediatric first aid training. This training is provided at intervals 'in house' but there is also the capacity for carers to access this training locally, with an accredited training provider, funded by Compass.

In accordance with a recommendation made during the previous inspection the agency has produced comprehensive policy and procedural guidance detailing foster carers' responsibilities to promote and improve the health of looked after children in their care. These guidelines include appropriate advice on the storage and administration of medication and the provision of a pro-forma Medication Administration Record, as also recommended in the previous inspection.

Whilst carers are not provided with a separate health record for each young person, to be updated during placement, there is a clearly stated expectation that specific records relating to health are retained by carers.

The agency policy is that a 'Green file' (record of placement) be retained by the carer, in respect of each child in placement with them, that all children are registered with a G.P. and that medical appointments are recorded by carers in the Green file and details are submitted by the carer to the agency within their 4 monthly return. Detail of medical appointments is also included in the report submitted to the panel as part of the annual review process.

The 'Green file' moves with the child throughout placement with Compass carers and, should placement with the agency cease, is returned to the placing authority. Copies of carers 4 monthly returns are also forwarded to placing authorities.

Health issues are also listed as a discussion point at four monthly supervision sessions with Supervising Social Workers.

During this inspection the health information contained in 4 monthly returns was found to be very basic and, in some cases, to give inadequate detail for example, under 'Health Appointments', one carer had stated 'Various consultations with professionals re health issues' as the summary comment covering four months.

One carer tracked during the inspection provided regular respite and short term break placements to young people with health issues requiring treatment with medication but the carer was not in possession of appropriate medical histories nor was there any written exchange of medication needs when these placements were provided (the carer confirmed that all information was conveyed verbally). This carer was not retaining any record of medication administration and the only written record of the respite/short-term placement was the daily log, which was not shared with the main carer/parent.

The agency currently relies, for consent to medical treatment, on appropriately signed Looked After Children documentation. In the case of one young person tracked this documentation was not on file and the carers told the inspector that they did not have a copy. In the case of a second young person the carer was in possession of signed medical consent but there was none on the young person's file. The Compass policy currently details that, even where medical consent has been received, consent for surgery will be obtained from the placing authority. One young person tracked during the inspection was obliged to wait in excess of two hours for treatment to a broken limb whilst appropriate consent was obtained.

The young person's records contained neither an incident form nor a copy of the notification made to the Commission for Social Care Inspection. There were indications in the case record that another agency had responded inappropriately at the time of the young person's injury but no evidence of any following up of this.

Both the Education Team and the Children's Services Team were noted to encourage young people to be involved in physical activities and to promote young people's awareness of appropriate diet.

Young people's questionnaires contained good evidence that their carers encourage healthy lifestyles: '... makes sure I have a shower and wash my hair regularly and eat healthy food'; 'I don't eat too much fattening food, I eat

vegetables and have a balanced diet and even eat fruit on occasions'; 'I have healthy meals and here I have warm water to wash in'.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):

Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15

The agency recruitment procedure is robust and management and staff are appropriately skilled and experienced.

Although staff and carers demonstrate a good awareness of safe care and young people reflect satisfaction with their current placements, agency records do not evidence a level of information sharing sufficient to demonstrate that young people can be appropriately cared for and protected.

EVIDENCE:

The agency has experienced some staffing difficulties during the last year as a result of which there have been a number of staff changes. The Social Work Manager left the agency in November and the two Directors are currently sharing supervision of Social work staff.

The Directors have previously had a very 'hands on' management style, which has been appreciated by carers and staff so this arrangement is working well. The Directors confirmed during the inspection that there were no immediate plans to appoint a replacement Social Work Manager.

The files of two members of staff who have been appointed since the previous inspection, were examined by the inspectors. These files were well ordered and contained full information as required under Schedule 1 of the Fostering Regulations. The agency is particularly commended on its practice of undertaking verbal checks on all references.

Compass employs the services of Active Personnel Management to provide an off-site personnel advisory service. The company provides Human Resource and employment law advice to the directors and produces employment contracts and procedures, job descriptions, probation assessment system, appraisal system and equal opportunities policy. The company are actively involved in the Compass recruitment process in an advisory capacity. The agency has established a Personnel Panel to consider recruitment issues and also progression within the agency.

Both the initial assessment and carer review processes have had their focus on competencies further developed since the previous inspection.

All carer files examined during this inspection contained household 'Safe Care' policies and carers spoken to had a good awareness of safe care and confirmed that regular training was provided.

Health and Safety risk assessments of carers' homes are carried out annually as an integral element of the review process.

The agency has also developed a risk assessment pro-forma, in line with a recommendation made during the previous inspection, for completion in respect of young people in placement sharing a bedroom. Although Social Work staff confirmed that this document was routinely completed the inspector visited a respite carer who regularly accommodated two young people sharing a bedroom, as they do in their mainstream placement, and this carer had not been made aware of the risk assessment content.

The agency utilises a matching pro-forma as part of the process of identifying appropriate placements for young people. In examining the files of carers and young people the inspectors noted crucial omissions on some of the matching pro-forma, one relating to a young person who had been abused and had the potential to abuse and one to a carer who had very specific dietary preferences, which could effect capacity to provide meal choices to young people. Whilst it was clear in one of these cases that the issue had been taken into account in making the placement, these considerations were not recorded.

All young people visited during this inspection were felt to be well matched to their carers.

Young people's questionnaire responses reflected their satisfaction with their placements: 'I go to nice places and I know lots of ...'s friends and family who

all try to help me'; 'I think Compass is good and they have nice carers'; One young person cited the worst thing about fostering as: 'When people say they're not my real parents'. Young people said that the 'Best Things' about foster care were: 'You get all the attention you need'; 'Being with a family that don't batter us'; 'This family is great, its sorted out my life' and simply 'the carers'.

The history of one young person identified clear concerns relating to abuse. The young person was placed with newly approved carers and a subsequent review rightly identified training requirements to better equip the carers to meet the young person's needs. These training needs have not to date been met (7 months).

During the inspection the inspectors examined the records of two carers accommodating 4 children. Although both files contained evidence of discussions held with local authorities regarding the granting of an exemption neither file contained a signed local authority authorization.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Standards 7, 13 & 31.

The agency is innovative in providing support systems to promote the development of young people's individuality and in promoting their educational and personal achievement.

The agency is not fully clear with regard to its expectations of carers providing respite and short-break services.

EVIDENCE:

Compass is currently in the process of developing two specialist schemes for children with disabilities and Asylum seekers. A Supervising Social Worker has been allocated to lead on each of these projects and both workers were spoken to during the inspection and each provided a written summary of work undertaken to date. Specialist training has already begun, in relation to both schemes, for both staff and carers and further training is scheduled for carers interested in developing their skills in a particular area.

Both workers are currently undertaking research in their allocated areas.

During the inspection the inspectors spoke with the Education Service Manager who also prepared written reports detailing service development since the previous inspection as well as specific information detailing support provided to some of the young people tracked as well as other young people currently being supported.

In line with legislative changes within education Compass is now providing up to 25 hours of Complementary Education to young people still without a school place after ten days in placement. This is an excellent provision, which placing local authorities are encouraged by the agency to buy into and to support where young people have particular difficulties accessing mainstream education. The Registered Manager advised the inspectors that some local authorities were increasingly reluctant to fund education and has been reminded to ensure that young people's records clearly detail the agency's negotiations with placing authorities, particularly where there is reluctance to financially support young people's educational attendance and achievement.

The agency provides a good level of training, in relation to young people's education, to carers emphasising their role in encouraging young people's attendance and achievement and has, since the previous inspection, incorporated training on 'Enhanced Day Care'. A number of carers are now supporting the teaching staff, the Children's Services Team and the main carer in providing 'experiential learning' sessions to young people, as an integral part of the Complementary Education Programme. Some commendable work has been undertaken by the carers providing this service and timetables, education plans and evaluations evidence that young people are achieving well, developing useful skills and gaining in confidence and self esteem. The carers involved in this scheme are well supported and supervised by the Education Service Manager.

One young person told the inspector 'I wouldn't be in school at all if it wasn't for Compass' whilst another said 'my carer really supports me and encourages me to complete all my projects'.

The 'Experiential Education Plan' of one young person detailed her involvement in an activity with a young person who was blind and another who was proficient in sign language to develop awareness of the impact of disability. This is commended.

The Children's Services Team are heavily involved in supporting young people within the Complementary Education provision as well as in delivering the Youth Achievement Award programme, which involves young people in a wide range of activities, recognising and rewarding their many achievements.

The Compass Education Service is currently conducting a pilot study for 'Catch Up', a reading intervention programme. The inspectors spoke, during this inspection, with the member of staff responsible for monitoring this scheme, who has also provided training to the carers of the young people involved. The anticipation is that a marked improvement will be noted in these young people's reading abilities. The young people's schools have been consulted and involved in this pilot scheme.

The agency is currently providing short-term breaks to two young people, one placed with local authority carers and one living with parents and additionally provides respite care for its own carers. Currently carers' recording in relation to respite and short term breaks is not consistent with recording by mainstream carers. The only record retained is a daily log and this is insufficient.

The Young People's Panel is currently discussing how respite affects young people who are fostered. The inspector attending the panel was impressed by their insightful comments during the meeting attended and by their confidence that their views and suggestions for improvement will be taken on board by the Compass Directors.

The agency is commended on its practice, where possible and appropriate, of approving a member of the carer's family to provide respite, in order that the child remains an integrated member of that family network.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Standard 11.

The agency provides an impressive range of both formal and informal opportunities for young people to make their views known and young people feel confident that their opinions count.

EVIDENCE:

Standard 10 relating to young people's contact arrangements was not fully inspected on the occasion of this inspection however the inspector notes that placing social worker questionnaires generally stated that carers worked well with young people's families, carers' questionnaires detailed ways in which they promoted contact and supported young people with it and young people's questionnaires reflected satisfaction with contact arrangements with one young person stating: 'I didn't like contact and my carers changed it'.

The inspectors commend the work undertaken by the agency, and particularly by the Children's Services Team, in providing a wide range of methods, forums and opportunities (both formal and informal) for consultation with young people. The Children's Services Manager has gathered a list of contact details for all local authority Children's Rights Officers by identifying a website and this information will be provided to carers (this is particularly necessary since some of the carers and young people visited during this inspection were unaware of these details); The children's website has been updated; Young people are being supported and encouraged to make written contributions to the carer's annual review process and to their own Looked After Children reviews; The Children's Service has developed of its own version of 'Pathway planning' and is utilising this to support placing authority input.

Children's Services Team members are currently being more closely linked with local carer groups, which are defined by geographical area, in order to develop their input into carer group meetings. Each young person placed through Compass will have a nominated support worker, which will further enhance informal systems for consultation.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Standard 29.

Carer allowances are clearly stated and appropriately paid.

EVIDENCE:

Standard 14 relating to the preparation of young people for adulthood has not been fully inspected on this occasion however the inspector notes the commendable work being undertaken by the Children's Services Team to support young people in this area and clearly also by carers. The members of the Young People's Panel were notably confident about their respective futures.

The Carers' Handbook contains clear detail regarding payments, including a full breakdown of the constituent elements of the allowance. The handbook also clarifies respite booking arrangements and entitlement. There is a full summary of tax and insurance responsibilities.

A budget is specifically allocated for individual carer's external training needs and access is by application to the Training Officer. This is commended.

Some carers are currently supporting young people involved in the Complementary Education Programme by providing experiential learning opportunities and the agency is paying additional fostering allowance in recognition of the time devoted to this task.

Designated administrative staff are responsible for carer payments. There were no major issues raised by carers during this inspection in relation to carer payments, although one carer did experience some delay in receipt of expenses when the Supervising Social worker omitted to submit her claim.

One carer commented: 'Children arrived less than a week before Christmas and within 24 hours Compass had sorted decisions re an allowance for personal clothing and presents'.

The agency is currently working on the introduction of skills levels for foster carers and inherently the development of a payment system, which reflects abilities and experience and therefore provides incentives for development.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Standards 1, 17, 19, 21, 24

Staffing difficulties during the last year have impacted adversely on the agency's capacity to evidence appropriate support to carers and young people through its records although practical support is rated highly.

EVIDENCE:

The agency's Statement of Purpose has been updated to fully reflect changes to company status since the previous inspection, relocation of the Head Office and developments in service provision.

The Compass Statement of Purpose is a commendably comprehensive document containing full information in respect of all areas listed under Standard 1.4.

The agency has been established ten years in September 2006. Expansion has been a gradual process with carers now recruited over several Midlands counties. The agency endeavours to recruit carers in geographical 'cells' and six local support groups have now been established covering different geographical areas. Expansion has been accompanied by appropriate staff recruitment. Supervising Social Workers are generally allocated to supervise carers in a specific geographical area and are closely involved in facilitating the support group in that area. The agency is currently working to similarly involve support staff. Carers have viewed the development of localised support networks very positively. Local venues are sought for these meetings wherever possible and where numbers make this feasible. The inspector attended a meeting of the Nottingham and Derby support group, which was held at the Loughborough Office but one of the agenda items was the identification of a more appropriate meeting venue. Local support groups are also utilised as training venues. The next meeting of the Derby and Nottingham group is to be used for delivering training on report writing and safe care.

Compass evidences a commendable commitment to the provision of training opportunities for both carers and staff. The inspectors spoke with the Training and Development Officer who detailed developments since the previous inspection including the piloting of a probation scheme for foster carers, which has been created by herself and another Supervising Social Worker and is based on the Skills for Care standards. It is envisaged that this course will be implemented with all new carers later this year. There has been a progressive development of several staff members as trainers and the agency is currently working on the development of skill levels for carers. Joint Child Protection training has been delivered to staff and carers and the Training and Development Officer is commended on links established with the Area Child Protection Team in negotiating and delivering this training.

Commendable carer training has been undertaken on 'Every Child Matters' aimed at raising the awareness of carers regarding the five desired outcomes for young people. The inspector sat in on one activity related to this and later viewed the very positive responses from carers.

The Training and Development Officer has herself undertaken teacher training at a local college since the previous inspection and her role has developed

tremendously. She is now writing and delivering a range of high quality training and is justifiably proud of her achievements.

All Compass staff spoken to during this inspection confirmed that they had good access to training (two were undertaking Post Qualification training) and received a good level of formal supervision and appraisal as well as informal support from colleagues. All staff spoke highly of the support offered by the Directors.

Both carers and staff are actively involved in the development of agency policy and practice with representatives involved in the Training Steering Group and the Practice Consultation Group. A Fostering Development Group meeting is additionally held twice a year for all staff and carers. Both Directors are closely involved with all carers, making an annual visit to all foster homes, meeting regularly with local groups and taking on direct challenges from the local carer support groups to compete in sporting activities. Several carers, in their questionnaires, commented on the importance of the annual Director's visit in making them feel valued and consulted.

At the carer support group attended by the inspector, the carer representative to the Practice Consultation Group reported on the development of a support group for carers subject to an allegation. A group is to be established, of carers who have experienced this and the members of this group will support carers through the process of an allegation. This is a commendable initiative. The agency has recently developed a support group specifically aimed at 'Men who Foster' and this group is to be facilitated by male Social Work staff.

Carer questionnaires rate support systems offered by the agency very highly with 29 of the 34 carers completing questionnaires citing it in the 'best thing about the agency' section: 'Nothing is ever too much trouble'; 'Organisation is efficient and professional staff are friendly and supportive'; 'By listening to what I say and taking it on board and training me Compass has helped me grow and develop as a carer'.

Since the previous inspection the agency has further developed the 'Foster Track' database system and has the expressed intention of becoming a 'paperless office'. Staff, carers' and young people's records are in the process of being transferred. Whilst the inspectors recognise that this is a transitional period, the task of tracking the records of carers and young people for the purposes of this inspection was difficult since transfer is at different stages with different files. The agency needs to record on the paper files what information has been transferred to the 'Foster Track' system, whilst this transition is in process.

Compass policies, procedures and pro-forma recording tools reflect a robust system for the supervision and support of carers, which is backed up by good monitoring and quality assurance systems. However, although the carer

records examined during this inspection indicated that carers were visited frequently (at least fortnightly), the written record of those visits was often scant and uninformative with single word or one line entries in relation to topics discussed. This is not appropriate.

Appropriate carer supervision records could not be found on all files (on one file only one supervision record in twelve months). Agency policy details that carers will receive supervision to a specified agenda every four months and this was not evidenced to be the case in respect of all the carers tracked. Carers spoken to during the inspection stated that they did not receive a record of their supervision despite the fact that agency policy details that they should.

All of the young people's files examined during the inspection evidenced gaps. The file of one young person accommodated for regular short-term breaks contained no Looked After Children paperwork although the carer was in possession of some.

The missing documents in carer's and children's records included: care plans, Looked After Children paperwork, health records, incident reports, notifications, correspondence, carer supervision records and carer 4 monthly returns.

Two young people raised concerns during the inspection regarding outstanding life story work. Compass is able to provide this service but at an additional cost to the placing authority. The local authorities involved with these two young people have not elected to purchase this service but nonetheless the agency and its carers should evidence support of these young people to place pressure on their placing authorities to commence or commission this work.

One of these young people said that she had waited 6 years for a life story book and that; 'Our life story books should be made when they say'. The inspectors note confirmation by the Directors, that this young person's complaint is currently being addressed by her placing authority Children's Rights Officer.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	2

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	3
9	2
15	3
30	X

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	4
31	3

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	X
11	4

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	X
29	3

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
2	X
4	X
5	X
16	X
17	3
18	X
19	4
20	X
21	3
22	X
23	X
24	2
25	X
26	X
27	X
28	X
32	N/A

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

NO

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 Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS24FS12	15, 17	The Agency must ensure that carers are provided with such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable them to provide appropriate care to the child. This includes information relating to day to day care needs, contact arrangements, education and health and should include clear arrangements in respect of medical consent.	01/04/06

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS9	Where the placement of a particular young person results in the agency identifying carer training needs in order to support that match, those training needs must be addressed with some urgency particularly where these relate to young people who have been abused or have the potential to abuse other children.

2	FS9FS8	The agency should ensure that the matching pro-forma is fully reflective of consideration of all known information about the young person or the carer, which has the potential to effect placement outcomes for young people.
3	FS24	Where life story work is clearly required and requested by a young person the agency and its carers should evidence support of these young people to place pressure on their placing authorities to commence or commission this work.
4	FS21	The agency should ensure that carer records are fully reflective of the issues discussed with them during contact visits. Carer records should clearly indicate the nature of a visit for example: supervision, support, unannounced visit and records should clearly evidence that visits are being undertaken in full accordance with agency policy.
5	FS24FS21	For the duration of the transition of information from paper files to the 'Foster Track' system the agency should develop a system for indicating on the paper files what information has been transferred.
6	FS24FS31	The agency is recommended to develop a pro-forma record for completion by carers in respect of respite/short-term stays. This pro-forma could be reflective of the elements included in the 4 monthly return completed by mainstream carers.
7	FS31	The agency should develop policy and procedural guidelines relating specifically to the provision of short-term breaks, highlighting any differences from the provision of respite breaks for its own carers. Within these the agency should clarify its expectations of carers providing respite and short-break services and should detail what information these carers must be in possession of.
8	FS12	The agency should review its policy, processes and procedures in relation to medical consent in order to ensure that health outcomes for young people in placement are positive.
9	FS8	Where a carer exceeds the usual fostering limit (three children) the agency should evidence that an exemption has been granted by the local authority in which the carer lives.

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