

# Adoption Matters Northwest

Inspection report for Voluntary Adoption Agency

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<b>Inspector</b>	Sean White
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	21/01/2008

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## 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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## **Service information**

### **Brief description of the service**

The agency has been established since April 2007, in its current model, following a merger with another voluntary adoption service with premises in Blackburn. Prior to the merger both agencies had been established for many years. The agency undertakes all the required work in respect of the recruitment, preparation, assessment and approval of adopters, both domestic and inter-country. It also undertakes a range of adoption support services, including birth records counselling and intermediary work. It is managed centrally but operates from three sites, Chester, Blackburn and Hale.

### **Summary**

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This is an agency that has an exceptional approach to ensuring children's futures are safeguarded through adoption. It has a very clear focus on recruiting only the most suitable people that can offer children an optimistic future and its endeavours are firmly grounded in rigorous attention to detail.

Managers and workers bring a highly developed knowledge and skill base to strategic and operational practices that are carefully considered and efficiently organised. Preparation and assessments of families are undertaken with great diligence and sensitivity and the outcomes are very positive. The agency is held in high regard by service users.

The service offers an open-ended commitment to its families and works with all agencies involved to provide bespoke support packages that address the most complex of needs.

Management arrangements ensure that the service functions at all times to a high standard and constant monitoring of practices and outcomes ensures a continuing high level of outstanding performance.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The agency has taken seriously the issues raised following the last inspection and has addressed the recommendations made conscientiously. The case files include all required supervision decisions, panel recommendations have the reasons explicitly recorded and a formal file monitoring system has been developed and implemented.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is not judged.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

The agency has a demonstratively clear focus on its activities being undertaken for the benefit of children requiring adoptive placements. Its recruitment activities are aimed at securing adoptive families that are able to provide for children with complex, challenging needs and circumstances. The agency has its foundations in the Christian faith but its work is clearly grounded in meeting children's and families' needs regardless of faith, culture or heritage. Indeed, much of the agency's success has been with people from a range of different backgrounds and circumstances. It works closely and tirelessly with colleagues from many different local authorities to secure the most suitable matches and has achieved excellent outcomes.

The preparation and assessment of applicants is undertaken with great rigour and attention to detail. There is a clear focus on people's motivation and parenting capacity which incorporates attachment style interviews into the analysis of families' support networks and interactions. Prospective adopters' reports (PARs) are written to a high standard; this enables the adoption panel to be fully informed and able to make confident recommendations.

The agency goes to great lengths when undertaking checks and references on prospective adopters; there is a particularly thorough approach which ensures that only the most suitable people are approved.

The adoption panels are managed well by experienced chairpersons who bring a studied and critical scrutiny to the reports placed before them. Panel members are thorough in their analysis of the material presented and discussions are focused on the information provided. The panels' membership brings a wide range of expertise and understanding, enabling them to make informed recommendations. The organisation and administration of the panels is very efficient and clear, detailed minutes of proceedings are made. This enables the decision maker to reach his conclusions from an informed standpoint.

The recruitment and selection of staff is undertaken rigorously, ensuring only the most suitable workers are appointed. The staff of the service demonstrate significant skills and knowledge of adoption work and their practices are of the highest order. Information from service users is universally and overwhelmingly positive.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

The agency has a particularly strong and committed approach to supporting adopters and offers indefinite access to its resources; this goes beyond the making of an adoption order.

The service works closely with placing authorities to ensure introductions and placements are managed in children's best interests. These partnership arrangements ensure that families have access to responsive resources at all times.

It is clear that the agency has a conscientious approach to working with families to enable them to maintain and develop their relationships. Complex and sophisticated packages of support are put in place wherever required and challenging circumstances are provided with assistance of the highest order. The agency has a particularly deep insight into the issues surrounding adoptive placements and their challenges, and meets them with enthusiasm and skill.

The agency has access to a range of specialist resources and advisers in addition to the statutory medical and legal advice.

The service has introduced a post approval training facility (Parenting Transitions) that provides families with a child in placement to develop further their understanding of the complex and challenging issues in adoption. Based on research findings, this is aimed at enabling parents to enhance their skill and confidence and presents as an excellent initiative. Placement stability is further enhanced by the service's therapy project. This aspect of the agency's work undertakes complex, therapeutic intervention to assist parents to meet their children's needs.

Support to adopted adults and birth parents is undertaken with the same commitment, enthusiasm and energy. The agency's approach is detailed and careful in this particularly sensitive area and produces successful outcomes that fulfil service users' needs admirably.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is not judged.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

This is an agency that is managed well in all areas and exceptionally well in most. There is a clear philosophical approach that is understood and shared throughout the agency, and which determines the arrangements and organisation of structure, strategy and practice.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The managers and staff are keenly aware of the importance of respecting and valuing difference and its impact on quality services.

The Statement of Purpose outlines clearly the undertakings of the agency; it is well presented and provides all required information. It is underpinned by excellent policies and procedures that describe a clear framework for the services provided and the agency website adds significant, further information. The agency also has (although it is not required) well-presented children's guides that offer clear information about adoption and adoption support.

The management structure is clearly defined and all lines of accountability and responsibility are understood throughout the agency. Managers present as highly knowledgeable and demonstrate a deep understanding of and commitment to, adoption, its importance for children and the life-long implications for everyone affected by it.

The arrangements for the allocation of work and workload management are efficient, inclusive and equitable. Staff are supported well in their endeavours and are encouraged and enabled to undertake their responsibilities to the highest standard.

There is a clear focus on staff development that ensures workers continually improve their knowledge and skill; training opportunities are excellent and most workers have post qualifying awards. The board of trustees is fully informed of the activities of the service and provides a fully supportive and encouraging framework within which the agency can operate and develop. Managers encourages initiative and innovative practice and much of the agency's undertakings are informed by research and deep a understanding of contemporary adoption practice.

The structures of the service are clearly identified and the wide range of activities undertaken are blended into a seamless operation that is efficient and administered to a very high standard.

The agency infrastructure, administration, case-file management and personnel practices are of the highest order. The agency's finances are meticulously maintained and an annual audit informs the board of its financial status and viability.