



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Local Authority Adoption Services

Peterborough City Council Adoption Service

Second Floor
Town Hall
Bridge Street
Peterborough
PE1 1FA

29 November – 1st December 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

ADOPTION SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of Local Authority

Peterborough City Council Adoption Service

Headquarters Address

Second Floor, Town Hall, Bridge Street, Peterborough,
PE1 1FA

Adoption Service Manager

Clive Rushworth

Tel No:

01733 746019

Address

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PE1 1FA

Fax No:

Email Address

Certificate number of this adoption service

Date of last inspection

NA

NA

Date, if any, of last SSI themed inspection of adoption service

NA

Date of Inspection Visit		29 November 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Rosemary Chapman	075198
Name of Inspector	2	Delia Amos	096257
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Gillian Sanderson	

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Local authority adoption services are subject to inspection by CSCI, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption Act 1976 as amended, the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983 as amended and the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Peterborough City Council Adoption Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000.

The Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983 and the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the CSCI regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000.

The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The inspection methods used in the production of this report are set out in Part B. Pre-inspection information, and the manager's written self-evaluation of the service, have also been taken into account. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Peterborough City Council is a unitary authority and has been since 1998, following Local Government Reorganisation, when it separated from Cambridgeshire County Council. It has established its own adoption service since that time.

Currently, the adoption team are based at Staniland Court in Werrington. The team consists of a team manager who is also responsible for the fostering service, an assistant team manager responsible only for adoption work, a senior practitioner (vacant), 3.5 social workers (1.5 vacant posts), 1.5 support worker posts (vacant) and administrative support which is shared with the fostering team.

The adoption agency is responsible for:

- the recruitment, assessment and support of adopters, including those wishing to adopt from overseas (although the request for this is small in number)
- birth records counselling
- matching and placing of children for whom adoption is the plan
- the service to birth parents of relinquished infants
- some post adoption support

The wider part of the agency deals with stepparent adoptions and the service to other current birth families. This part of the service is also responsible for undertaking work, including life story work, with children who have adoption as their best interests decision.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

INSPECTOR'S SUMMARY

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

The inspection fieldwork took place over 3 days in November/December and in addition, a number of questionnaires were received from specialist advisers, approved adopters, birth families, placing social workers and placing authorities. Many documents were received in advance and read as part of the inspection. The preparation which the agency did was very good and the time table of visits planned was well organised.

Three questionnaires were received from birth family members. One was very positive in terms of the service received now, although the child was adopted some years ago and that experience was not positive. Two others suggested that staff did not always listen to them and that although some parts of the experience had been helpful, they felt birth families need more support.

Four questionnaires were received from placing councils and 3 from placing social workers. These indicated that generally there were good working relationships but the staff shortages were acknowledged and this had impacted on support and timeliness. Forms F were said to be variable but generally evidenced good preparation and one commented on the professional, reliable, responsive and willing service.

Nine questionnaires were received from adopters. These were generally positive about the staff involved and although some adopters have negative experiences they were still able to comment positively on staff's helpfulness. Some felt there was not enough information about the process, some commented on how long things took but there were also comments about supportive, friendly, knowledgeable staff and adopters also acknowledged that staff were overstretched and overworked. As a general rule, there was satisfaction up until approval then less satisfaction afterwards linked to lack of contact and information.

During the inspection some excellent placements were seen and some very positive things were heard about good working relationships, management who listen, consultation with staff, good supportive and cohesive team working and maintaining a reasonable service with very limited resources

The main concern was the level of staffing, with many vacancies in the adoption team. This had an impact on developmental and strategic issues, leaving staff to adopt a reactive approach when problems arose. Managers had become more operational to cover the work and there had been little time to consider the challenge, acknowledged by the staff, of how to make successful placements for older, more damaged children. There was a lack of cohesive post adoption support and a lack of a cohesive, developed service to birth families. The adoption agency is developing to meet the National Minimum Standards and no major shortfalls which are a cause for concern were identified.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

The 1 standard assessed was not met.

A statement of purpose has been written and recently approved by the Executive side of the Council. However the statement of purpose does not address all of the requirements of Regulation 2 and these must be included. The document is readable and the additions are readily available. The Agency has recently been involved in commissioning a new Children's

Guide which will be used throughout the local consortium. The agency has access to translation services to make any documents more accessible to service users.

Securing and promoting children's welfare (Standard 2)

The 1 standard assessed was met.

Although there are systems in place to ensure the adoption agency are aware at an early stage of the types of children likely to need adoptive placements, this needs to become more strategic and a written plan developed which also evaluates the effectiveness of recruitment strategies. There was evidence that the matching of children with suitable families is of high importance and strenuous efforts were seen in order to match a sibling group from another culture with a suitable family. The panel also take this responsibility seriously and recently decided not to approve a match where the religious needs of a child had not been fully taken into account.

Prospective and approved adopters (Standards 3-6)

2 of the 4 standards assessed were met.

Prospective adopters receive a prompt response from the agency following their initial enquiry and some adopters interviewed said this was why they chose to adopt through Peterborough, as they felt welcomed and valued. Appropriate written information is available for both prospective domestic adopters and those who wish to adopt from overseas. This clearly spells out the eligibility criteria and the types of children needing an adoptive family. A social worker will undertake an initial home visit and if this indicates that adoption is a suitable avenue to be explored, then adopters are invited to attend a 4 day Prepare to Adopt course, which is held 4 times a year. Attendance on this course is compulsory and forms part of the assessment. It affords an opportunity to meet an experienced adopter. The home study was said by adopters interviewed to be carried out with sensitivity and professionalism and many of the forms F inspected showed evidence of analysis and were thorough. Some were less so, and these were usually completed by workers employed on a sessional basis. All appropriate checks are taken up and the recommendations of the Brighton and Hove enquiry have been taken on board, but there is a need to record the level of Criminal Records Bureau check, which the manager confirmed was enhanced. The post approval part of the process was said by some adopters to be poor and they felt left in limbo with little information. This needs addressing. Approved adopters are given full information about children with whom they may be matched. They see the form E and meet social workers and usually foster carers to ask further questions. One family had not met the foster carers prior to matching however, and felt this would have been useful and would have prevented them having some unnecessary anxiety. The agency needs to ensure adopters are asked whether or not they will inform the agency if a child dies during childhood and record this. The importance of keeping information about a child's past is stressed and adopters interviewed were able to discuss this. Some support is available to adopters and children from a variety of sources and this is a developing area for the agency. Currently it is ad hoc and on a more individual basis and a whole raft of more strategic post adoption support needs to be developed. There is a monthly support group for adopters, occasional social events and some training is available. An adoption allowance scheme is also in place.

Birth parents and birth families (Standards 7-9)

1 of the 3 standards assessed was met.

The agency provides a limited service to birth parents at present. The child's social worker does most of the information gathering about the child's background and discussion with the family about their views but there is no independent support and there was no evidence of the birth family's involvement in this i.e. forms E were not signed. The agency provides a good letterbox scheme, and will assist with letter writing if necessary. There is a lack of a coherent strategy for birth families and this is an area which needs some development. Questionnaires received from birth families confirmed that they felt more support was needed at all steps in the process.

Adoption panels and agency decisions (Standards 10-13)

1 of the 4 standards assessed was met.

The panel currently uses the BAAF publication "Effective Panels" as its guidance and needs to develop its own policies and procedures as outlined in 10.2. The panel is properly constituted but there have been 2 occasions recently when the panel would not have been quorate without the use of non-panel members from the agency. It is recommended that this practice cease as it is contrary to the spirit of the guidance on how panels should operate. Panel members observe a panel before becoming a member but there is no formal induction training and this is recommended. Prospective adopters attend panel both for approval and matching and this is a well-established practice. Adopters said they were made to feel welcome in this situation. The panel meets on a regular basis, with the meeting dates planned a year in advance. Extra meetings can be arranged if necessary. Papers are sent out with a week's notice to enable proper consideration. The minutes are good and clearly record the decision and reasons for any recommendations. Panel members ensure their accuracy by going through them thoroughly at the start of each meeting. The agency decision maker reads the panel papers in advance and has a discussion with the panel administrator the day after the panel. If she needs to see the minutes in draft form, these can be made available. The decision is made in a timely manner and adopters are notified in writing of the decision. However, the child and birth parents are not always notified of the decision and this must be rectified to comply with regulatory requirements.

Fitness to provide or manage an adoption agency (Standards 14-15)

1 of the 2 standards assessed was met.

The manager is qualified and experienced in all aspects of childcare including adoption and plans to undertake a management qualification. References and checks, including an up to date enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check were in evidence.

Provision and management of the adoption agency (Standards 16-18)

1 of the 3 standards assessed was met.

The agency is well managed and lines of communication and delegation are clear. There are good internal systems in place at all levels to monitor the work of the agency. The executive side of the Council is aware of its responsibility as corporate parent but it is not clear that the 6 monthly reports it receives give sufficient detail about the management and outcomes of the adoption agency to ensure effective monitoring at this level. The agency has access to appropriate legal, medical and other specialist advice and staff feel they benefit from this. Written protocols should be developed in relation to the use of specialist advisers.

Employment and management of staff (Standards 19-23)

3 of the 5 standards assessed were met.

The staff employed by the agency are qualified, undertake regular training, are supervised on a regular, formal basis and supported. The written recruitment and selection procedures need updating to include the need for telephone references, which the manager reports are being carried out on new staff, although the evidence of this was not in the files inspected.

The agency is well managed and managers are said by staff to be supportive and approachable. The level of administrative support and office equipment is adequate.

The major issue of concern is the lack of social work staff. There are currently only 2 full time equivalent social worker posts in the adoption team and 2.5 vacancies and additional 1.5 adoption support vacancies. This has had an impact on the work being undertaken, particularly in terms of more strategic approaches to support. Although the Council are advertising these posts, it is unlikely that even with a full complement of staff, there will be sufficient to cover the increasing demands of adoption and support to the adopters with increasingly more challenging children. Adopters speak highly of the staff in the service but acknowledge that they seem overstretched.

Peterborough City Council is seen as a fair and competent employer and it is addressing issues of recruitment and retention in a positive way.

Records (Standards 25-28)

1 of the 4 standards assessed was met.

Appropriate records of a reasonable quality are maintained and stored confidentially in cabinets but these cabinets should be fire and waterproof. The archives are stored in a school and the use of this venue should be risk assessed, given that schools can be targets for arson and vandalism. Although the agency has systems in place to ensure relevant information is provided in accordance with the Data Protection Act and Human Rights Act, it does not have sufficient policies and procedures in relation to access to information.

Supervisors see case files in supervision but there is no file audit system in place for monitoring the quality and content of case files and this should be developed and case records should be dated. Personnel files contain all the necessary information, although the method of evidencing the Criminal Records Bureau check should be improved. Panel members' files are in the process of being developed in line with the requirements of the standards.

Fitness of premises (Standard 29).

The 1 standard assessed was not met.

The adoption agency is currently located in premises which are not ideal, but they are soon to be relocated into larger and more appropriate premises. There is appropriate security in place and the storage of records has been discussed under standard 25. A disaster recovery plan needs to be devised

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's adoption service satisfies the regulatory requirements:

NA

Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their adoption service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

NA

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of a failure by a Local Authority adoption service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial:

NA

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority adoption service:

NA

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection
(Not relevant at first CSCI inspection)**

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983 and the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate officer of the Local Authority is requested to provide the Commission with an action plan, which indicates how requirements are to be addressed. This action plan is shown in Part D of this report.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption Act 1976, the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983, the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 or the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services. The Authority is required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for adoption services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	LA 2	LA1	The statement of purpose must be rewritten to include all the information required by Schedule 1 and reapproved by the Executive side of the Council	30.4.05
2	8 1983 Regs	LA4	The level of the Criminal Records Bureau check must be recorded in the adopters' files.	30.4.05
3	12, 1983 Regs	LA13	The birth parents must be notified in writing of any decision made.	30.4.05
4	LA 10	LA21	The agency must ensure there are sufficient staff to carry out its functions.	30.4.05
5	LA 9	LA2	The agency must address the issue of children placed for adoption in its child protection procedures and include all the elements required by Regulation 9.	30.4. 05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	LA2	The agency should develop written plans to implement and evaluate effective strategies for recruiting adopters.
2	LA5	The agency should develop a system whereby adopters are asked whether they will notify the agency in the event of the death of an adopted child and record this decision.
3	LA5	The agency should give prospective adopters the opportunity to speak to the child's foster carers prior to a match being agreed.
4	LA6	The agency should develop a more strategic approach to support after approval and post placement.
5	LA7	The agency should provide support to birth parents independent of the child's social worker.
6	LA7	The agency should obtain the signatures of birth parents on all forms E wherever possible or indicate why this was not possible.
7	LA9	The agency should develop a strategy for working with birth parents before and after placement, including written information about support groups.
8	LA10	The agency should develop its own set of policies and procedures which cover the issues in 10.2.
9	LA11	The agency should develop an induction for panel members.
10	LA11	The agency should not use non-panel members to sit on the panel, as this is contrary to the spirit of the operation of the panel.
11	LA14	The manager should undertake a relevant management qualification.
12	LA17	The executive side of the council should receive written reports on the management and outcomes of the adoption agency every 6 months to satisfy itself that the agency is effective and ensures good outcomes for children.
13	LA18	The agency should develop written protocols which govern the role of all specialist advisers.

14	LA19	The agency should update its recruitment and selection procedure to include the making of telephone enquiries to verify written references.
15	LA19	The agency should provide more detail of the Criminal Records Bureau check on personnel files.
16	LA25	The agency should store records in fire and water proof cabinets and undertake risk assessments of the file storage.
17	LA26	The agency should ensure that all its policies and procedures in relation to access to information cover the areas detailed in 26.2.
18	LA27	The agency should develop a file audit system to ensure that case files are monitored for quality and content.
19	LA27	Case records should be signed and dated.
20	LA29	The agency should develop a disaster recovery plan which covers the provision of premises and the safeguarding and back up of records.

- Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g. LA10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Placing authority survey	YES
Placing social worker survey	YES
Prospective adopter survey	YES
Approved adopter survey	YES
Birth parent / birth family member survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	NO
• Interview with adopters and prospective adopters	YES
• Interview with birth parents	YES
• Interview with birth family members	YES
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of adoption panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records (personnel, adopter, child, complaints, allegations)	YES
Date of Inspection	29/11/04
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	61
Number of Inspector days	7
Additional Inspection Questions:	
Certificate of Registration was displayed at time of inspection	NA
The certificate of registration accurately reflected the situation in the service at the time of inspection	NA
Total Number of staff employed (excluding managers)	10

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable on this occasion.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear written statement of the aims and objectives of the adoption agency and the adoption agency ensures that it meets those aims and objectives.

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.2, 1.3 (partial) and 1.4 – 1.7)

There is a clear written statement of the aims and objectives of the adoption agency which describes accurately what facilities and services they provide.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The manager has recently written the statement of purpose which was approved by the executive side of the Council in November 2004. It is well written and readable but does not include some information which is required by Regulation such as the procedure for the recruitment, assessment, preparation, approval and support of adopters, monitoring and evaluation procedures and a summary of the complaints procedure. The manager has a draft version which includes this information so she intends to seek approval for this as soon as possible.

The BAAF Children's Guide to Adoption has been used but members of the Consortium have commissioned another Children's Guide, which will be used in future. This is very child friendly and has spaces in the back for the addition of local information such as advocacy services, the complaints procedure and information about the Commission and the Children's Rights Director. The manager confirmed that stickers with this information will be appended before it is given to any child.

The City Council can access the services of an interpreter if any documents need to be translated or explained. The agency has recently used a translator for a relinquishing birth parent and a prospective adopter.

Staff have seen the statement of purpose and think it is reflective of the work of the agency.

Has the Statement of Purpose been reviewed annually?

(Record N/A if the information is not available)

YES

Has the Statement been formally approved by the executive side of the council?

YES

Is there a children's guide to adoption?

YES

Does the children's guide contain all of the information required by Standard 1.4?

YES

Securing and promoting children's welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The needs and wishes, welfare and safety of the child are at the centre of the adoption process.

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.3)

The adoption agency has written plans for the implementation and evaluation of effective strategies to recruit sufficient adopters to meet the needs of the range of children waiting for adoption locally.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The agency has systems in place to know the types of children likely to need an adoptive placement in the near future. These systems include early meetings with the child care staff when a best interests decision is looking a likely outcome. This enables specific needs to be identified and there is a spreadsheet which logs the children needing placements and the adopters coming through for approval or already approved. The agency is small and has a good awareness of the types of children needing placements but it needs to become more strategic and develop a written plan to implement and evaluate the strategies used to recruit adopters for children locally.

There is evidence that the agency endeavours to match children with adopters who meet their needs and reflect their culture, religion and so forth. There was evidence that the panel had recently rejected a proposed match which was not ideal in terms of religion. There is also evidence that strenuous efforts have been made to find a suitable placement for 3 siblings from another culture.

As Peterborough is a small Council, children often have to be placed outside of the area for their safety and security. Thus interagency placements are used if adopters recruited in house are not suitable. The agency sees itself as part of the bigger adoption picture and recent circumstances have resulted in it being a net provider of families for other agencies, as well as just meeting the needs of its own children, for that reason.

In the last 12 months:

How many children were identified as needing adoptive families?

20

How many children were matched with adopters?

31

How many children were placed with the service's own adopters?

12

How many children were placed with other services' adopters?

4

How many children were referred to the Adoption Register?

X

In the last 12 months, how many children were matched with families, which reflected their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language?

X

What percentage of children matched with the adoption service's adopters does this represent?

92

%

How many sibling groups were matched in the last 12 months?

4

How many allegations of abuse or neglect were made about adopters approved by this adoption service?	1	
On the date this form was completed, how many children were waiting for a match to be identified?	10	

Prospective and approved adopters

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **The adoption agency recruits and supports sufficient adopters from diverse backgrounds, who can offer children a stable and permanent home to achieve a successful and lasting placement.**

Standard 3. (3.1 – 3.3 and 3.5 - 3.6)

Plans for recruitment will specify that people who are interested in becoming adoptive parents will be welcomed without prejudice, will be given clear written information about the preparation, assessment and approval procedure and that they will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>There is a recruitment pack of information for prospective adopters and this makes it clear that it is an inclusive process and outlines the requirements for the preparation, assessment and approval. The eligibility criteria and expectations are clearly stated. There is a separate pack of information given to prospective adopters who wish to adopt from overseas and this is followed up by a home visit from a social worker with experience and knowledge in this field. The agency has subscribed to the Overseas Adoption help line to ensure the information is accurate and up to date.</p> <p>There are systems in place to prioritise prospective adopters who are needed for particular children and this can be through the use of sessional workers or commissioning a service with an agency.</p> <p>The written information includes information about the preparation and support services and the prospective adopters have an opportunity to talk to approved adopters during the preparation course. This can also be arranged on an individual basis if there are particular issues of concern which may be allayed by talking to someone who has had direct experience of adoption.</p> <p>The recruitment pack includes information about the types of children needing adoptive families and this is also highlighted in the Prepare to Adopt course, through the use of various adoption publications and through verbal information. If a family has been identified for a particular child or children, the information is shared by the child's social worker and the adoption worker. Adopters spoken with were very clear that they had been given detailed information about the types of children who need adoptive families.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>

Standard 4. (4.1 – 4.9)

Prospective adopters are involved in a formal, thorough and comprehensive assessment, preparation and approval process.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

There is a formal and comprehensive assessment, preparation and approval process. All prospective adopters are required to undertake the 4 day Preparation to Adopt course. The course is run 4 times a year and takes place over 4 days (2 groups of 2 consecutive days) over a 2 week period. The dates are published annually to enable prospective adopters to have good notice in order to take time off work or make other arrangements necessary to facilitate their attendance. Travelling expenses are reimbursed. Adopters spoken with felt the arrangements were convenient and well organised. They confirmed they were asked to evaluate the course at the end and this included the practical elements such as venue, as well as content. Foster carers who wish to adopt are able to attend the course and this was confirmed by adopters interviewed, who had not taken up this opportunity as yet. The course includes social workers outlining the types of behaviour likely to be encountered and an adopter gives their personal experience of this. There is also a monthly support group once adopters are approved, which builds on this. The manager reported that those people wishing to adopt from overseas are required to attend training which is available through the Overseas Adoption Helpline.

There was an acknowledgement from staff that they need to continue to develop and evaluate this course so it fully addresses the preparation of families for older children. The agency uses the competency based form F assessment during the home study and many of these inspected were comprehensive, analytical and thorough. Some were not of the same high standard however, and this tended to be those assessments completed by sessional and other workers. Adopters spoken with said their home study was conducted with professionalism and sensitivity.

The files inspected showed evidence of written references, Criminal Records Bureau and other checks. However, the level of the check must be recorded. The manager confirmed it was at an enhanced level. The agency has taken on board the recommendations of the Brighton and Hove enquiry and takes up 6 written references, ex partner and employer references, other local authorities, NSPCC and CAFCASS. There is clear information about why these checks are required. Adopters spoken with felt well informed throughout the approval process.

Standard 5 (5.1 – 5.4)

Approved adopters are given clear written information about the matching, introduction and placement process, as well as any support to facilitate this they may need. This will include the role of the Adoption Register for England and Wales.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

Adopters spoken with were aware of the matching, introduction and approval process and the agency are preparing a post approval brochure which will be a welcome development. Currently this information comes through some written information and during the preparation and assessment process and the placement planning meeting. They are given the leaflet about the Adoption register. Some adopters felt the post approval part of the process was poorer than the pre approval part and some felt they were left in limbo, with little contact.

Adopters are able to read the form E and any other reports in relation to any child proposed for a match. They can discuss the implications of any health issues with the medical adviser or other practitioner. They are also able to talk to foster carers where this is appropriate. One set of adopters spoken with did not have this opportunity prior to matching, however, and they felt it would have been worthwhile. They were able to speak to them after the match had been agreed.

The agency does not have a system in place at present which asks adoptive parents whether they are prepared to agree to notify the agency if an adopted child dies during childhood or shortly afterwards and pass this information onto birth parents. This is being addressed through the Consortium.

A family book was seen which had been prepared by prospective adopters. This is used at panel and in the preparation of the child for introductions. Ways of making these more specific for particular children was discussed and the manager confirmed that this was encouraged and other forms of media such as a video recorder may be used in the future.

Does the local authority have written procedures for the use of the Adoption Register?

YES

Standard 6 (6.1 – 6.7)

Adoptive parents are helped and supported to provide stable and permanent homes for the children placed with them.

Key findings and evidence**Standard met?**

3

The area of post adoption support is a developing one for this agency. The agency had an adoption support worker in post until recently and there are now 1.5 vacancies for such a role. Although support to adopters is addressed as fully as possible, the staffing shortages in the agency make this difficult at times. Families have an allocated social worker and there are a variety of resources which can be tapped into such as counselling, therapeutic input and attendance on courses. These resources are commissioned according to assessed need. Financial support is also available such as adoption allowances, grants, expenses and so forth. There is a monthly adoption support group, adopters can be put in touch with experienced adopters as “mentors” and there are some social events. The agency should develop a more strategic approach to the provision of support and it may be when staffing vacancies are filled, this can be addressed more fully.

Families who adopt from overseas are allocated a social worker to provide advice and support.

It was clear through talking to adopters that they were aware of the importance of keeping information and memorabilia about a child’s birth family. Adopters spoken with had such information and items and these were being dealt with appropriately.

There has been one disruption in the last year although 2 other placements were in the process of disrupting during the inspection. It was clear that support had been accessed and there were plans to hold disruption meetings chaired by someone independent of the case in order to learn from them. The panel were also going to be involved in the learning process.

Number of adopter applications started in the last 12 months

23

Number of adopters approved in the last 12 months

19

Number of children matched with the local authority’s adopters in the last 12 months

31

Number of adopters approved but not matched

9

Number of adopters referred to the Adoption Register

13

How many placements disrupted, between placement and adoption, in the last 12 months?

1

Birth Parents and Birth Families

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- **Birth parents are entitled to services that recognise the lifelong implications of adoption. They will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.**

Standard 7 (7.1 – 7.5)

The service to birth parents recognises the lifelong implications of adoption.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>The service to birth parents and families is an area in need of development and this is acknowledged by the manager and other staff throughout the adoption agency in its wider sense. Currently the child care social workers are responsible for working with birth families and independent support has been offered but on a more ad hoc basis and there is no written information about the possible services available to be accessed. The adoption agency works with the birth parents of relinquished babies and the inspectors were informed that an independent advocate was provided for the birth mother of a recent voluntarily relinquished infant.</p> <p>The birth parents views are recorded in the Form E but none of the forms inspected were signed by the birth parents and this is recommended as good practice, or a comment made on the form why this was not possible. Likewise, it is not certain that birth families see the form E and the information written about them although they do see the court reports. Currently 2 birth families are receiving independent support but this is not available for everyone.</p>		

Standard 8 (8.1 – 8.2)

Birth parents and birth families are enabled to contribute to the maintenance of their child's heritage.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>There is a robust letterbox scheme in place, which has had a lot of input from one of the adoption social workers. Thus birth families provide photographs and information through this system. They are also encouraged to provide items and information for the life story work and book and this was evident in some of the children case tracked. Some dissatisfaction was expressed by some of the staff interviewed that life story work was not always undertaken by the best people. There were also comments made about some very good life story work and information being provided. A clear and consistent strategy for this should be developed.</p>		

Standard 9 (9.1)

The adoption agency has a clear strategy for working with and supporting birth parents and birth families (including siblings) both before and after adoption. This includes providing information about local and national support groups and services and helping birth parents to fulfil agreed plans for contact.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

The agency should develop a clear strategy for working with birth parents before and after adoption. At the moment some good work is undertaken but this is not consistent. There is a good letterbox scheme and workers will assist families to write appropriate letters but there is a lack of information about the support available.

Adoption Panels and Agency decisions

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Each adoption agency has an adoption panel which is organised efficiently and is effective in making quality and appropriate recommendations about children suitable for adoption, the suitability of prospective adopters and the matching of children and approved adopters.
- The adoption agency's decisions are made to promote and safeguard the welfare of children.

Standard 10 (10.1 – 10.3)

Adoption panels have clear written policies and procedures about the handling of their functions and ensure that they are implemented.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>The adoption panel does not have the policies and procedures referred to in 10.2. All panel members have a copy of "Effective Panels" which gives guidance about some of these issues, but the agency needs to develop its own policies and procedures. This has been recognised and someone has been commissioned to undertake this process, which is likely to be completed within the next 3-6 months. Evidence of this was inspected. Prospective adopters have been able to attend panel for about 2 years and this is in relation to their approval and for matching once approved and for review purposes. Adopters interviewed confirmed they had attended panel, had been able to address the panel and had found the experience a positive one.</p>		

Standard 11 (11.1 – 11.4)

The adoption agency shall ensure that each adoption panel is properly constituted, that panel members have suitable qualities and experience to be a panel member and have regular training to allow them to keep up to date with changes in legislation, guidance and practice. Where the adoption agency is involved in inter-country adoption, each member of the panel understands the implications of being adopted from overseas and seeks advice, when necessary, on the laws and eligibility criteria for the overseas country.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

The panel is properly constituted and has a good range of people within the membership including a birth parent, an adoptee and adopters. All members have suitable qualities and experience of adoption and/or childcare. The legal, medical and professional advisors keep panel informed of any relevant changes and questionnaires received from panel advisers confirmed this was seen as part of their role. There is at least one training event each year. There was evidence of a joint training event taking place in March 2005, which will also include workers from the agency and is being facilitated by BAAF.

Inter-country adoption is rare and the manager said that appropriate advice is provided on a case-by-case basis when this occurs.

There was evidence in the minutes inspected that the latest panel member had observed a panel before sitting, as had the newly appointed panel chair.

Panel members have signed confidentiality statements and have Criminal Records Bureau checks in place.

The current induction for panel members is limited, involving observation of a panel and reading appropriate literature, and this needs further development.

It was noted that in the last 3 months, there has been 2 occasions when the quoracy of the panel was problematic, due on one occasion to the long-term sickness of one of the agency panel members. This necessitated a non-panel member from the agency sitting on panel to ensure quoracy. Although the guidance in "Effective Panels" does not debar this, it is clear that it must only be used rarely and when there is a vacancy on the panel. At the time, there was a vacancy on the panel, but the inspectors would argue that 2 occasions in 3 months is not rare and would recommend that this does not happen again, as it is not in the spirit of the legislation or guidance relating to panels. The manager is trying to resolve this by recruiting another agency member of panel. It is accepted by the inspectors that this was done with the best of intentions to avoid delay and that legal advice and the permission of the Assistant Director was sought.

Is the panel a joint panel with other local authorities?

NO

Does the adoption panel membership meet all of the statutory requirements?

YES

Standard 12 (12.1 – 12.3)
Adoption panels are efficiently organised and conducted and are convened regularly to avoid delays in the consideration of prospective adopters and matching children and adopters.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Adoption panels are well organised and the number of panels held has been increased to one every 3 weeks to ensure that the business is progressed swiftly. Additional panels can be convened if necessary but the main panel dates are set for the year to ensure members are aware of the date and their commitment to them. The previous and current panel chairs confirmed that papers are received at least a week in advance of the panel to allow due time to read and consider the information. Staff confirmed there was an expectation that all the paperwork was completed 3 weeks in advance of the panel date. The panel minutes inspected were of a high quality and clearly recorded the discussion and reasons for the recommendation. Panel members were observed to go through the minutes at the start of the panel to ensure they are agreed as accurate and other minutes inspected demonstrated that this was the usual process.

Standard 13 (13.1 – 13.3)
The adoption agency’s decision is made without delay after taking into account the recommendation of the adoption panel and promotes and safeguards the welfare of the child.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	1
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The Assistant Director is the Agency decision maker and she confirmed she obtains the panel papers in advance of the panel and reads these. If there appear to be contentious issues, she will see the draft minutes but in all cases, she meets with the panel advisor within 2 days of the panel to discuss the issues. She may also contact the panel chair if this seems necessary. The decision is made quickly and there was evidence that this is conveyed in writing to adopters. However, at the moment, the manager said that the agency does not routinely convey the decision to the child and parents or guardian and this needs to be developed (Regulation 12 1983 Regulations as amended).

Fitness to provide or manage an adoption agency

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The adoption agency is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

Standard 14 (14.1 – 14.3 and 14.5 – 14.6)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the adoption agency:

- possess the necessary knowledge and experience of child care and adoption law and practice and
- have management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and
- ensure that it is run on a sound financial basis and in a professional manner.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The manager who has oversight of the fostering and adoption unit is a qualified social worker and has a number of years experience in relevant fields of work such as childcare and family finding. The assistant team manager, who has responsibility for the management of the adoption staff, has many years experience in adoption work and is a qualified social worker. Senior managers are also qualified and experienced. Specific financial expertise is available if necessary in the wider Council.

The team manager obtained her social work qualification in 1993, evidence of which was seen. She has managed the fostering and adoption service since 2001 and prior to that, managed an Independent Fostering Agency and a Looked after Children team. She has also had child protection experience which included direct work with children and families. She is registered to undertake a management qualification (Certificate in Health and Social Care Management), which was due to commence in October 2004. Unfortunately the start of this was postponed, through no fault of the manager.

Staff interviewed spoke highly of the manager and the assistant team manager. She is seen as a good leader and has managed the service well, despite staffing shortages. She has a job description and this clearly outlines her responsibilities, to whom she is accountable and the level of delegation.

Does the manager have Management NVQ4 or equivalent?

NO

Does the manager have at least 2 years experience of working in a childcare setting in last 5 years?

YES

Standard 15 (15.1 – 15.4)

Any person carrying on or managing the adoption agency are suitable people to run a voluntary organisation or business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The personnel file of the manager contained written references but she was appointed before the requirement for telephone references was mandatory. She has a satisfactory and up to date Criminal Records Bureau check at enhanced level and this was inspected. The manager informed the inspectors that the Human Resources section has a data base which highlights when these checks are due for renewal.

Provision and management of the adoption agency

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The adoption agency is organised and managed efficiently, delivering a good quality service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 16 (16.1 – 16.7)

The adoption agency is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The agency is well managed and the roles of the various managers in the agency are clearly defined, with deputising arrangements in place. Staff were aware of whom to contact in the absence of the team manager. They were also clear about accountability and said communication was good and effective. Although the team is overstretched, they were clearly cohesive and work well together, speaking highly of the management at all levels. The Council has a written policy on conflicts of interest of which staff were aware. The Council operates within anti discriminatory guidelines and has an equal opportunities policy. Such training is mandatory to all staff in the children's social care section. Suitable staff undertake work with children, adopters and birth families and these staff receive appropriate training to aid their understanding of the issues involved. The social workers in the adoption team are all white but are mixed by gender.

There are written procedures which govern the use of the adoption register and there was evidence in the files inspected that the appropriate forms are completed in respect of children and approved adopters.

Number of complaints received by the adoption service in the last 12 months

3

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated

2

Standard 17 (17.1 – 17.3)
There are clear written procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the adoption agency and ensuring quality performance.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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There are a number of monitoring procedures in place. The assistant director has responsibility for overseeing all the children’s services and has an overview of the children coming into the care system and the types of placement they need. She supervises the service managers, one of whom has responsibility for the adoption and fostering unit. The permanent post holder is currently off sick but interim arrangements have been put into place and although this person has been in post for a short time only, his presence was commented on positively. There are performance information management meetings which are attended by the entire management of the children’s social care section and performance is monitored at those meetings also.

There are 6 monthly reports on the work of the children’s services, which are presented to the Overview Committee, but as these reports were not available for inspection, it was unclear how much detail there is on the work of the adoption agency. The executive should receive written reports on the management and outcomes of the adoption service every 6 months to satisfy themselves that the adoption agency is effective and ensures good outcomes for children.

Information about the fee payable is available in writing to those adopters wishing to adopt from overseas. Other charges are made at the BAAF recommended fee level for interagency placements.

How frequently does the executive side of the council receive written reports on the work of the adoption service?

Monthly?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quarterly?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less than Quarterly?	YES

Standard 18 (18.1 – 18.5)
The adoption agency has access to specialist advisers and services appropriate to its needs.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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Staff said they had access to the specialist advisers needed and spoke particularly highly of the access to legal advice. There is also a medical adviser, a looked after children’s nurse, educational psychologist and mental health workers, all of whom are available to give advice to staff. The medical adviser will also talk to adopters about health issues and she sits as a member of the adoption panel.

The children’s social care division has a black and ethnic minority children’s group who meet to look at the specific needs of looked after children from ethnic minority communities and can consider the needs of children whose plan is adoption.

The agency does not have written protocols in place for the role of the specialist advisers and it is recommended that this include checks of qualifications and membership of professional bodies.

Employment and management of staff

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in the adoption agency are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children waiting to be adopted or who have been adopted. The number of staff and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the adoption agency.

Standard 19 (19.1 – 19.14)

Anyone working in or for the adoption agency are suitable to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The staff who work in the adoption agency are qualified, experienced and have appropriate checks undertaken on them.

There are written recruitment and selection procedures in place but these should be updated to include the requirement for telephone references to verify written references. All staff who are involved in recruitment and selection have received appropriate training.

Personnel files inspected had evidence of written references and although the manager confirmed that telephone enquiries were also made, there was no evidence of these in the personnel files. There was a note on the file that the Criminal Records Bureau check had been undertaken and the date but there was no reference number to enable checking to take place. The manager reported that the Human Resources Department keep a database of these but it is recommended that more detail is maintained on the personnel file also. All Criminal Records Bureau checks seen were up to date.

All social workers have a social work qualification and evidence of this was seen in the files inspected. One social worker has completed the PQ1 award and is due to commence the PQ childcare award in January 2005.

Social workers spoken with demonstrated a good knowledge of adoption work and childcare experience. They have access to training, advice and guidance and access to appropriate policies, procedures, legislation and other documents. Staff receive a copy of the complaints procedure and are required to attend the equal opportunity training programme. Any social workers undertaking assessments have had training and are experienced.

Two members of staff currently undertake the birth records counselling under Section 51. These staff members have had training and are experienced and confident about their role and responsibilities. If other staff undertake this role, they should have training.

The medical and legal advisers confirmed they had appropriate qualifications and experience. There are no unqualified staff in the adoption agency at the moment but any such tasks undertaken by unqualified staff will be fully supervised by the assistant team manager. Likewise, support workers are line managed by social workers or managers.

Do all of the adoption service's social workers have DipSW or equivalent?

YES

What % of the adoption service's social workers have a PQ award?

25

%

Standard 20 (20.1 – 20.12)

Staff are organised and managed in a way which delivers an efficient and effective service.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Staff interviewed said they were well managed and regularly supervised. There is an appraisal system in place and although this seemed to be operating in the adoption team, staff in other parts of the service who carry out the child care side of the adoption work, reported that their appraisals were not happening with the regularity which they should be. The managers in the adoption agency are qualified and experienced and able to assist staff with prioritising work to ensure the service is effective and efficient. The levels of delegation and responsibility are clearly laid down in writing.

The department has a new database which will assist with the monitoring of children in the looked after system but this is currently being done on spread sheets pending its full implementation.

Staff interviewed were very positive about the training opportunities available to them and the managers also feed back any developments to ensure staff are up to date.

There were no concerns expressed about the level of administrative or clerical support and office equipment, such as computers and telephones. Appropriate procedures are in place for dealing with enquirers and these are usually dealt with by the adoption team within 24 hours.

Staff confirmed they had job descriptions, contracts and the General Social Care Council Code of practice. They have a staff handbook which contains all the relevant policies and procedures.

Standard 21 (21.1 – 21.4)

There is an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff to meet the needs of the adoption agency and they are appropriately supported and assisted in providing a service.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

1

There is not sufficient staff in the agency. There are currently a number of vacancies and one member of staff is on long-term sick leave, leaving only 2 full time equivalent social work posts. There are also vacancies for 1.5 support workers. The managers have been acting down to cover the work, but it is doubtful if fully staffed, there are enough staff to undertake all the functions effectively, which would include the full range of post adoption support. The vacancies have been advertised and the Council are looking at recruitment and retention issues across the board. There are already a number of policies in place for flexible working and so forth and the council has sent out questionnaires to all employees asking for ideas and has held a lunch to discuss ideas further. Staff felt the council were actively seeking to address retention issues. Agency and locum staff have been employed to cover shortfalls but this has not been satisfactory in some cases and adopters have then got to get to know other staff once they are approved.

Total number of social work staff of the adoption service	5	Number of staff who have left the adoption service in the past 12 months	3
Number of social work posts vacant In the adoption service.	2.5		

Standard 22 (22.1 and 22.3)

The adoption agency is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Staff interviewed thought Peterborough City Council was a fair and competent employer and recognised that it had improved and was continuing to improve its policies and procedures in relation to staff support. Staff have recently had questionnaires to complete in relation to this and there have been retention lunches held to look at how staff can be recruited and retained in the service. Staff felt that the senior management was committed to listening and consultation. They confirmed that a counselling service was available and there was an occupational health department to assist.

The City Council has a whistle blowing policy and staff interviewed indicated that they were aware of this. This is included in the staff handbook and there is also training given to new staff which is facilitated by the Human Resources Department.

Standard 23 (23.1 – 23.6)

There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There is a City Council training programme which is available to both new and experienced staff. The council can also sponsor staff on social work courses or National Vocational Qualification courses and the PQ1 and PQCCA are also available. New staff have a 6 week induction which is commenced within 1 week of employment. Staff spoken with felt that training was available and that they were encouraged to attend courses.

There is a Staff Review and Development scheme in place which looks at training need. As stated earlier, staff in the Adoption team had had these, but staff in the wider agency had not consistently been appraised in the last year.

Staff interviewed said they had regular team meetings. Once a month these are with the fostering team and once a month as an adoption team, which is used to discuss practice developments, changes in legislation and so forth. The team manager also meets fortnightly with other team and service managers and the assistant director to consider practice, legislation and policies. The team also has an away day each year and will be having a training day with the panel in March 2005.

The training section evaluates all courses and a training plan is presented each year. External courses are also available to staff.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are maintained securely, kept and are accessible when required.

Standard 25 (25.1 – 25.5)

The adoption agency ensures comprehensive and accurate case records are maintained for each child, prospective and approved adopter with whom the agency has worked.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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The case records for children and adopters which were inspected were generally of a good quality. Children's case records are retained within the childcare teams and this includes an adoption file which runs alongside the child care file. The adoption team also maintain a file to assist with family finding but all the relevant information is amalgamated once an adoption order is made.

Staff interviewed demonstrated an awareness of the issues in relation to confidentiality and all sign a confidentiality statement along with their contract of employment. Current records are stored in locked filing cabinets, but it is not clear whether or not these are fire proof. As these also contain the post box service, the provision of fire and waterproof cabinets is recommended. Archived records are stored in a school. Again, these are in locked cabinets in a locked room and the administrative manager gave an assurance that the cabinets were fire proof in this instance. The school has a CCTV system, security system and smoke alarms, but the inspectors were concerned that schools can sometimes be targets for arsonists and vandalism and these premises may not therefore be ideal. Risk assessments and regular monitoring is recommended.

Panel members sign a confidentiality statement and are provided with a lockable box to store their panel papers at home.

The adopters files inspected had clear evidence that Criminal Records Bureau, status and health checks had been undertaken for them and any adults over 18 years old. Written references were also on the files.

The new data base system is congruent with the Looked After Children system.

There was evidence in some of the files inspected that supervisors had discussed cases with their supervisee and the decision was on a different coloured piece of paper in the file and was signed and dated.

Standard 26 (26.1 – 26.2)
The adoption agency provides all relevant information from its case files, in a timely way, to other adoption agencies and local authorities with whom it is working to effect the placement of a child.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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The agency has a system in place to provide information to other agencies. However, the policies and procedures need to take account of all the requirements of 26.2 in its procedural documents and these should be developed during the re-writing of the policies and procedures which has been commissioned.

Standard 27 (27.1 – 27.6)
There is a written policy on case recording which establishes the purpose, format, confidentiality and contents of files, including secure storage and access to case files in line with regulations.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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The agency has a written policy on case recording. Separate records are kept for staff, complaints and allegations. The Human Resources Department have a checklist to ensure personnel records contain relevant and necessary information. Social work staff are expected to bring case files to supervision but there was no evidence of a file audit system in place, in terms of monitoring of quality and content, although there was evidence of supervisors decisions on case files. The records inspected were legible but not all were signed. Files are stored in locked cabinets. Complaints are monitored by the complaints unit but a record is also maintained in the relevant file.

Standard 28 (28.1 – 28.2)
Up-to-date, comprehensive personnel files are maintained for each member of staff and member of the adoption panel.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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There are personnel files held on members of staff. The system for panel members is developing but has been established and the manager is aware of the requirements.

Fitness of Premises

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- The premises used by the adoption agency are suitable for the purpose.

Standard 29 (29.1 – 29.5)

Premises used by the adoption agency are appropriate for the purpose.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The adoption service is based at Staniland Court, premises which are shared by other companies. It is not intended that members of the public have access to these premises and there are no facilities for interviewing anyone. Appointments can be made to see people at the main City Council offices in the centre of Peterborough and suitable rooms can be booked for this purpose. Office space for staff is limited also.

The premises are not ideal for that reason and this has been recognised by the Council. The Assistant Director informed the inspector that alternative premises have been located and the adoption service will move there next year.

The administrative and IT systems are robust and password protected. Ongoing case records are stored on the premises of the adoptions service in locked cabinets in a lockable room. The archived records are stored in a school. This has been discussed under standard 25. There is a security system for the office and this should be monitored regularly as this has been breached on at least one occasion in the past. The manager confirmed there was insurance cover in place although this was not inspected.

Peterborough City Council has an emergency plan but this does not include the elements recommended by 29.5 i.e. the provision of premises and the safeguarding and backing up of records.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

D.1 Local authority manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 29/11/04 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Action taken by the CSCI in response to the provider's comments:

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the local authority adoption manager, both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 12th January 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Public reports

It should be noted that all CSCI inspection reports are public documents.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

Local authority manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I _____ of Peterborough City Council confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Designation _____

Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of Peterborough City Council am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Designation _____

Date _____

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

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