



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

ADOPTION SERVICE

Lincolnshire County Council Adoption Service

**Council Offices
Eastgate
Sleaford
NG34 7EB**

Lead Inspector
Rosemary Chapman

Announced Inspection
12th December 2005 09:30

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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Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
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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 *Adoption*. 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	Lincolnshire County Council Adoption Service
Address	Council Offices Eastgate Sleaford NG34 7EB
Telephone number	01522 554464
Fax number	01522 554006
Email address	
Provider Web address	www.lincolnshire.gov.uk
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Lincolnshire County Council
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Philip Hunt
Type of registration	Local Auth Adoption Service
No. of places registered (if applicable)	0
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection First inspection.

Brief Description of the Service:

Lincolnshire County Council is a large, rural Local Authority which is currently going through a period of reorganisation. A Director for the newly established Children's and Families Department has recently been appointed and posts for other senior managers are in the process of being appointed to.

Currently, there are three family placement teams based in the East, West and South of the County. These teams are directly managed by three Practice Managers, responsible to three Service Managers, and cover both fostering and adoption work.

Lincolnshire provides a comprehensive adoption service. This includes:

1. The placement of looked after children with adoptive families.
2. The recruitment, preparation, assessment and approval of adoptive families.
3. Adoption support, including letterbox contact, intermediary services and birth records counselling.
4. Assessment and approval of applicants wishing to adopt from overseas.

SUMMARY

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

This was the first inspection of Lincolnshire County Council's adoption service. Prior to the inspection fieldwork, a number of supporting documents were supplied to and read by the inspector. Questionnaires were also received from 15 approved adopters, 3 birth families, 10 placing social workers and 3 specialist advisers.

The inspection fieldwork was carried out by 3 inspectors over a period of 3.5 days.

The two adoption panels were observed and the panel chair interviewed.

Interviews were also held with:

1. the agency decision maker
2. the nominated manager
3. the professional advisor to the panel
4. the panel administrators
5. the recruitment and publicity officer
6. an elected member
7. a group of placing social workers
8. family placement workers, practice and service managers and administrative support at the 3 sites
9. adoption support workers and training officers

Six adoptive families were selected to be case tracked and this involved reading their files and the files of children placed with them, as well as interviewing them at their homes.

Other documents, which included personnel files, panel members' files, adopters' and children's case files were read during the fieldwork and the premises and archives were inspected.

The inspectors would like to thank the managers and staff for their cooperation during the inspection. The inspection timetable was well organised and the inspectors were made welcome and given access to everything they required. All staff interviewed were honest and open, enabling the inspection to be carried out efficiently and effectively.

What the service does well:

The service is good at recruiting suitable adopters and placing children with adoptive families. One children's social worker commented: "the agency are committed to obtaining adoptive placements and make good use of out of County trawls and the East Midlands Consortium". Another felt: "the needs of the child are always paramount and no match is made unless everyone involved believes it is right and will enable the child to lead a happy and fulfilled life".

Adopters have commented that the preparation courses are "very good". The agency has good health and safety questionnaires and takes up a number of statutory references, over and above the minimum required. There are good monitoring and matching procedures in place to ensure that children do not drift once a decision to place them for adoption is made. Information sharing meetings are held prior to a child being placed with an adoptive family which is very good practice for ensuring prospective adopters are aware of a child's history. As a positive aspect of practice to highlight, one child's social worker commented: "information sharing days, communication between all relevant professionals to ensure a high standard of information and support is provided".

Prospective adopters and birth families are notified of agency decisions in a timely manner.

Adopters felt happy with the level of support they receive from their family placement officer. Comments included "our social worker has been absolutely brilliant. The children's social worker is also excellent and very, very helpful" and "first class support, help and advice from start to finish". There is also imaginative use of resources by the adoption support workers. The letterbox system has been thoughtfully developed and gives good assistance to birth families.

The adoption agency is well managed at all levels, with good communication and good structures to ensure a consistent standard of practice. There is a very good level of training for staff, including qualifying and post qualifying awards and external and internal courses.

There is also an impressive level of monitoring of the work of the agency both by the internal management and the Council.

Placing social workers felt relationships between themselves and the family placement officers were good. One said: "good communication with agency workers, an open and honest approach" in response to what are positive aspects of the service. Another said, in response to that same question: "The Family Placement Unit is generally very easy to work with – good liaison between individual FPO's (family placement officers) and the children looked after teams"

The questionnaires received from adopters indicated a high level of satisfaction with the service. Comments included: "all members of staff have been very supportive" – "our FPO has been extremely helpful and provided all information required. He has dealt with matters swiftly and efficiently"; "100% satisfied with the service we've received"; "the whole process has been extremely quick and efficient and we cannot praise the service enough" and "overall I have found it an extremely good service".

What has improved since the last inspection?

This is the first inspection of the service.

What they could do better:

There are some inconsistencies in practice in relation to the assessments of adopters and some procedures should be tightened up. This includes the taking up of a family reference, financial information, criminal records checks from overseas and the interviewing of adult children/ex-partners. Some assessments would benefit from being more analytical and based on competencies as the standard was not universally good.

Some adopters felt that contact with the family placement officer after approval until a match was made was inadequate.

Some aspects of recording needs improving, including the recording of the adoption panel members' reasons for their recommendation in the panel minutes. Although the recording in case minutes is generally of a good standard, some files inspected had information misfiled and a more stringent file audit system is recommended. Case decisions by supervisors also need to be on case files.

Adoption support is a developing area for the County and although there has been a small team of workers appointed to this role, it is limited for the size of the County and needs further development. Ways of improving access to psychological input also needs improving to ensure that adopted children have equal and fast access to this service, wherever they live.

The service to birth families also needs development and their input into information about their children should be consistently evidenced.

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.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing - There are no NMS that map to this outcome

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements identified during the inspection

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- The agency matches children with adopters (NMS 2)
- The agency assesses and prepares adopters (NMS 4)
- Adopters are given information about matching (NMS 5)
- The functions of the adoption panel are as specified (NMS 10)
- The constitution and membership of adoption panels are as specified (NMS 11)
- Adoption panels are timely (NMS 12)
- Adoption agency decision is made without delay and appropriately (NMS 13)
- The manager is suitable to carry on or manage an adoption agency (NMS 15)
- Staff are suitable to work with children (NMS 19)
- The agency has a robust complaints procedure (NMS 24 Voluntary Adoption Agency only)

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

2,4,5,10,11,12,13,15,19

The agency has appropriate practices in relation to the appointment of suitable staff, the assessment of prospective adopters and matching which ensures children are placed safely with adoptive families.

EVIDENCE:

The agency are well aware of the types of children for whom adoptive families are required and their priorities are clearly detailed in the recruitment literature and in the business plan. The recruitment officer tailors his strategy to try and attract prospective adopters for older children and for sibling groups and there is a process of evaluation of the success or otherwise of the various strategies. At the time of the inspection, there were a low number of children waiting for suitable families (10), which is some measure of the success of recruitment, as most children are placed within the County. Approved adoptive families reflect the community, which is predominantly white British.

The agency has developed a very good system for matching children and which prevents drift. A small group of managers and representatives from the 3 geographical areas meets fortnightly to consider all the children and adopters who are waiting, to ensure suitable matches are made. Where this proves difficult in-house, then other measures, such as the consortium, the register,

advertising and looking at other agencies are used. Siblings are placed together unless a psychological assessment of their attachment indicates that this is not suitable.

Applicants who wish to adopt are involved in a comprehensive and formal preparation and assessment process. This also includes adopters who wish to adopt from overseas, who are required to attend the preparation groups and have specific information pertaining to inter-country adoption discussed with them during their assessment. The staff who run the groups have all undertaken a "training for trainers" course. All applicants and course leaders evaluate each course. The preparation material has been recently reviewed and new materials put into place. The County runs a number of groups throughout the year, in the 3 different areas, so applicants can attend a group out of their area, rather than wait for a local group if they are willing to travel. Some questionnaires received indicated that there had been some delay in waiting for a place on preparation groups: "staff shortages meant long delays although they did keep us informed" and "some gaps in the beginning as we waited 6-7 months for a preparation course". Others felt the process had been quick: "We were surprised how quickly a place was available on the preparation course". More recent information inspected suggests that this problem has been resolved. Adopters commented that the content of the preparation course was "very good" and "excellent" and "the preparation course was very informative and useful".

The assessment includes good checks of statutory agencies including CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) and the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children). There are also good health and safety and pet ownership questionnaires, which take into account the needs of a rural community (farm equipment and asbestos, firearms and knives). Although the procedures include interviewing adult children and previous partners, there was evidence that this was not undertaken in every case and the views of the applicant were sometimes taken at face value without further exploration or the seeking of evidence from other sources. Likewise, applicants who have been born or lived in other countries did not always have criminal records checks from that country. This needs to be tightened up. The agency does not currently take up a family reference and this is recommended. The pro-formas used for the interviewing of referees would benefit from further development and they are limited in the information sought and not very full. Not all assessments inspected included financial statements. Thus there were some inconsistencies in practice.

Many of the forms F inspected lacked analysis and did not address competencies. Some managers indicated that they were trying to improve this area as they had recognised it as a weakness.

Once applicants are approved, they receive further written information about the next stage of the process. Some adopters felt that there was too little

contact with family placement officers following their approval until a match was made. Once a match is made, there is very good information sharing. An information-sharing meeting is always held and adopters commented that this was very worthwhile. This is very good practice. One adopter said: "we are always told what is going on and have had a meeting with the foster carer to find out about the child". The medical adviser is always willing to speak to adopters about the health implications of any child to be placed with them and this was also seen as very valuable.

Although the procedures indicate that a mid way review should take place during introductions, there was evidence that this was not always undertaken, which could have a potentially detrimental effect on a placement. Managers should ensure that the agency's practices are uniformly implemented.

Adopters prepare a family book and some of these were observed at panel. Those observed were of varying usefulness in relation to giving appropriate information to children and more advice needs to be given about the purpose of these books to ensure they are child friendly.

The adoption panel is appropriately constituted with a mix of professionals and lay people with personal experience of adoption, and there are plans in place for the appointment of an independent chair in January 2006. The panel has its own policies and procedures but these are being reviewed to reflect the needs of the new legislation. The appointment of a new Chairperson is being seen as an opportunity to reflect on current practices and procedures and adjust these where necessary. It is suggested that a book of photographs and brief information about panel members be made available for applicants attending panel, so they have some awareness of whom they will see.

Prospective adopters can attend panel for approval and matches and this practice was observed at both panels. They are made welcome by the Chairperson but the waiting area is inappropriate, although the agency has made the best use of the area in the circumstances. This was raised during feedback and the Councillor suggested an alternative, which the manager has since confirmed will be implemented at the next panel.

New panel members have an induction and all panel members have the opportunity to receive regular training. It is suggested that this be recorded on their files as evidence that it has been undertaken. All panel members have signed confidentiality agreements.

Panels are efficiently organised and timely and the papers are sent out to members 2 weeks in advance of the meeting. The current agenda is very full and this has been recognised and measures to address this are being implemented in the New Year, with the timing of panel being extended.

The minutes reflect the discussion but do not give the reasons for the recommendation. The separate recommendation on case files do not state the membership of the panel, and some siblings do not have a minute pertaining to them as an individual on their case files. These issues should be addressed.

The agency decision maker reads the panel papers and minutes before making his decision, and there are procedures in place to cover his role if he is unavailable or if he disagrees with the recommendation. The decision is made within a short space of time and there was evidence that adopters and birth parents receive written notification of agency decisions in a timely manner. The decision sheet used needs minor amendments, which were discussed during feedback.

The evidence in the nominated manager's personnel file indicates that he is a suitable and safe person to manage the agency. Appropriate recruitment and selection procedures are in place to ensure that staff employed are also suitable and safe, although the wording of the procedures needs to be clarified in relation to the taking up of telephone references in every case. Family placement workers are qualified and many are undertaking or have undertaken post-qualifying courses. They all have had updated child protection training and training on the new legislation. Any unqualified or trainee staff are supervised by their practice manager.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- The adoption agency provides support for adoptive parents (NMS 6)
- The agency has access to specialist advisers as appropriate (NMS 18)

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

6,18

Adopters are provided with support both pre and post adoption order, but this service is in the process of development. As it is currently limited, this may have a detrimental effect on ensuring adoptive families remain intact.

EVIDENCE:

Current procedures include practices which prepare adopters well for children moving in. This includes good matching, information sharing and meetings with foster carers and the medical adviser. Those adopters who adopt from overseas have the assistance of a worker who specialises in this area and information from other organisations. One comment from an adopter said: "our social worker has made us very prepared for everything". A placing social worker commented: "the adopters had been given insight into the probable issues to arise".

Adoptive parents spoken with had a positive attitude to keeping information from the birth family safe and they confirmed they had life storybooks for use in the present and future. The agency is also in the process of commissioning "Lifecard", which is an interactive programme for updating life story work.

Adopters interviewed were happy with the level of support received from their family placement officer once children were placed with them. They also confirmed that they were aware they could access support at anytime in the future. Post adoption support is a developing area for Lincolnshire. A small team of workers has been appointed but the inspectors consider this to be insufficient for a large County the size of Lincolnshire. However, the work they have done to date is imaginative and useful. There is a good format for addressing support needs and there is good sign posting to universal services. A contract is being established with Adoption UK to provide 3 groups, 4 times a year and this is due to commence next year.

There had been no disruptions in the last 12 months but the procedures ensure a meeting is held and issues reported to the adoption panel as a learning mechanism.

The agency has access to legal and medical advisers in addition to the universal services which it can access, such as CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and County Psychological Services. Staff said that access to CAMHS was variable in terms of waiting times, depending on which part of the County you live in. As this could be up to 9 months, ways of improving access for adopted children and families needs to be developed. Staff felt the medical and legal advisers were accessible and provided useful help and advice.

Protocols on the roles of specialist advisers need to be developed.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Birth parents and birth families are involved in adoption plans (NMS 7)
- Birth parents and birth families are involved in maintaining the child's heritage (NMS 8)
- The Adoption agency supports birth parents and families (NMS 9)

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

7,8,9

The agency gives a limited service to birth families at present which means the contribution to their child's heritage is compromised.

EVIDENCE:

The service to birth parents and families is one which the agency recognises is in need of development. There is very good practice in relation to the operation of the letterbox scheme. This has been sensitively and thoughtfully developed taking into account the needs of birth families in relation to the difficulties of letter writing. There is guidance to social workers when setting up the contract for contact arrangements and any special needs in relation to literacy or other issues are taken into account. Adopters are asked to write first so that it is easier for birth parents to know what to say in reply. Assistance is available from the adoption support team in letter writing.

There is a designated adoption support worker who works with birth families in relation to intermediary work and contact with adult adoptees. Birth families are also referred to NORCAP (National Organisation for the Counselling of Adoptees and Parents) if appropriate.

Non-consenting birth parents are currently assisted by the children's social workers, although there are plans to establish an independent service shortly. This service will be time limited in terms of the number of hours available to birth families and given the size of the County, may be insufficient. The questionnaires received from birth families confirmed that they received written information and were told what was going on but said: "it was never at the right time, it was always a bit late". They did not all feel they were treated with respect and consideration. The forms E inspected showed little evidence that they had been shared with birth families prior to coming to the panel. Few

were signed or had an explanation of why a signature was not obtained. This should be implemented. A comment received from a birth parent said: "every time I put my opinions across they didn't listen and made it feel as if I might as well have been banging my head up a wall".

Evidence was seen of life storybooks and later life letters. These were imaginatively completed and efforts had been made to obtain photographs and other memorabilia. Adopters interviewed expressed an awareness of the importance of such information and were positive about the contact arrangements made.

Placing social workers interviewed were committed to undertaking life story work with children and recognised the importance of this. Training is also given on direct work with children.

Management

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- There is a clear written statement of the aims and objectives of the adoption agency and the adoption agency ensures that it meets those aims and objectives (NMS 1)
- The agency provides clear written information for prospective adopters (NMS 3)
- The manager has skills to carry on or manage the adoption agency (NMS 14)
- The adoption agency is managed effectively and efficiently (NMS 16)
- The agency is monitored and controlled as specified (NMS 17)
- The staff are organised and managed effectively (NMS 20)
- The agency has sufficient staff with the right skills / experience (NMS 21)
- The agency is a fair and competent employer (NMS 22)
- The agency provides training for staff (NMS 23)
- Case records for children and prospective / approved adopters are comprehensive and accurate (NMS 25)
- The agency provides access to records as appropriate (NMS 26)
- The agency's administrative records processes are appropriate (NMS 27)
- The agency maintains personnel files for members of staff and members of adoption panels (NMS 28)
- The premises used by the adoption agency are suitable for purpose (NMS 29)
- The adoption agency is financially viable (NMS 30, Voluntary Adoption Agency only)
- The adoption agency has robust financial processes (NMS 31)

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

1,3,14,16,17,20,21,22,23,25,26,27,28,29

The agency is well managed at all levels and this ensures consistency of practice and good outcomes for children.

EVIDENCE:

The agency has a statement of purpose, which is comprehensive, detailed and clear. This has been approved by the executive in November 2005. Staff spoken with felt the statement of purpose reflected the policies, procedures

and practices of the agency. The agency has 2 children's guides, in an effort to provide age and ability appropriate information for children. All information can be made available in different formats and the statement of purpose is available on the web site.

The information pack which is sent to all those enquiring about adoption is clear about the process and welcoming to all, regardless of age, sexuality, marital and financial status and so forth. This information includes details of the types of children who need families. The agency has a leaflet, which specifically addresses inter-country adoption. Further information is given out once all applicants are approved to adopt which supplements this. The prioritisation criteria are detailed in the information pack. Applicants have the opportunity to talk to approved adopters, adopted persons and foster carers at the preparation groups which take place.

The agency is well managed at all levels and despite the County being large and divided into three geographical areas, the standard of service provision is generally consistent. Management structures are therefore effective in ensuring consistency of practice.

All the managers are appropriately qualified, skilled and experienced. Levels of communication are good, staff feel involved and informed and lines of accountability and delegation of responsibility are clearly defined. The adoption service is part of the Children's Social Care Children Looked After and Children's Regulatory function, which integrates the adoption service into the whole remit of services and placement choices for children looked after.

Staff interviewed reported that they received regular and worthwhile supervision. They confirmed there were workload management systems in place and that their interests and specialisms were respected as far as possible. There is one person who undertakes duty for all adoption and fostering enquiries, which ensures a consistent response to all enquirers.

Staffing levels are felt to be adequate at the moment, although there have been times when this has not been the case. Staff spoke positively about the improvements in the County Council and were happy with their employment by the Directorate. Staff felt that they were treated fairly and examples were given of flexibility in allowing workers to meet childcare arrangements or when staff were off sick.

Training was an area where staff felt Lincolnshire excelled. Training opportunities were said to be "second to none". Unqualified staff have been enabled to attend qualifying courses and there is an arrangement with a local university to provide distance learning. There is evidence that external training is provided, such as specialist training by Dan Hughes, which was made available for staff. There is an annual training plan in addition to individual training plans for workers. Staff have undertaken 6 days training on the new legislation. The training section will also provide or commission other

specialist training in addition to the annual training planned for all staff. 20% of social workers already have achieved the Post Qualifying Child Care award.

Procedures for monitoring the work of the agency are very good. There are regular meetings for managers across the areas, performance management statistics are produced at frequent intervals, the adoption panel is provided with information about children and adopters waiting at every panel, there are independent audits of the service and quarterly accountability meetings. The Executive plays an active role in monitoring and controlling. The portfolio holder is involved, enthusiastic and committed to providing good outcomes for children in the County. She meets with the Director on a weekly basis, the Assistant Director on a monthly basis and all members receive a monthly corporate governance report, which includes key performance indicators. The Child Policy Development Group is involved in scrutinising the adoption service (amongst other things). The Executive receives reports on a 6 monthly basis. Two Councillors are members of the adoption panel and can also raise any concerns with the portfolio holder.

The agency has procedures in place for case recording, the maintenance of confidentiality and access to records. Case files inspected were generally well structured, with case notes typed, signed and dated by the worker and in most cases, these were also signed by the manager. However there was little evidence of decisions by supervisors on case files. Although there is a managerial audit system, this needs to be developed on a more frequent basis as some of the files inspected had information missing or misfiled. Adoption files for children did not comply with the requirements – some information was filed on the LAC file. A contents sheet and a more regular file audit system by practice managers are recommended.

Personnel and panel members files were well organised and contained the information required. Due to incorrect information being obtained, administrative staff have not had CRB (criminal records bureau) checks but they have now been applied for, as have the CRB check on 2 panel members, and evidence was provided that this was the case.

The premises used by the agency are reasonable and identifiable. Records are securely stored and IT systems are backed up. The agency has a disaster recovery plan which relates specifically to the adoption service in addition to the corporate policy.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 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>
No NMS are mapped to this outcome	

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	2
8	3
9	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
2	3
4	2
5	3
10	3
11	3
12	2
13	3
15	3
19	3
24	N/A

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
No NMS are mapped to this outcome	

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
6	2
18	2

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
3	3
14	3
16	3
17	4
20	3
21	3
22	3
23	4
25	2
26	3
27	2
28	2
29	3
30	N/A
31	N/A

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

N/A

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Voluntary Adoption and the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2003 or Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action

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	AD4	The agency should ensure that the views of adult children/ex partners are explored in every case, or clear reasons given why this was not possible.
2	AD4	The agency should ensure that assessments of adopters are more analytical and address competencies and consistent practice in relation to, for example, financial statements is implemented.
3	AD4	Checks of applicants who have lived or been born abroad need to be more robust.
4	AD4	The interviewing of referees needs further development. A family reference should be taken up and more thorough recording of these interviews needs to be implemented.
5	AD5	The agency should ensure the prospective adopters are given sufficient advice about the preparation of suitably child focussed family books.

6	AD11	The agency should ensure that the induction and training undertaken by panel members is recorded on their files.
7	AD12	The agency should ensure that the minutes of the adoption panel clearly record the reasons for the recommendation. Separate minutes should be prepared for each sibling and the panel membership should be detailed on the minutes which are placed on case files.
8	AD19	The recruitment and selection procedures should be clarified in relation to telephone enquiries to verify referees.
9	AD6	The agency should continue to develop the post adoption services, including looking at ways to improve access to psychological services for adopted children.
10	AD18	The agency should develop written protocols for the use of specialist advisers.
11	AD7	The agency should ensure that birth parents see the information presented to panel and that evidence of this is available either by their signature or an explanation given of why this could not be obtained.
12	AD25	Decisions by supervisors should be recorded on case files.
13	AD27	The system for file audits should be improved to ensure information is filed on the correct file and that the contents comply with requirements.

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