



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

## ADOPTION SERVICE

### **BAAF Adoption and Fostering**

**Saffron House  
3rd Floor  
6-10 Kirby Street  
London  
EC1N 8TS**

*Lead Inspector*  
**Vivien Slyfield**

*Announced Inspection*  
**23rd November 2006      10:00**

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Adoption*. They can be found at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://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](http://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

<b>Name of service</b>	BAAF Adoption and Fostering
<b>Address</b>	Saffron House 3rd Floor 6-10 Kirby Street London EC1N 8TS
<b>Telephone number</b>	0207 593 2000
<b>Fax number</b>	0207 593 2001
<b>Email address</b>	
<b>Provider Web address</b>	
<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	British Association for Adoption and Fostering
<b>Name of Nominated manager (if applicable)</b>	Mo O`Reilly
<b>Type of registration</b>	Voluntary Adoption Agency

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

1. The category of registration is:- Domestic Adoption Services only (DA)
2. To provide adoption support services to adults only.

**Date of last inspection**  
**14<sup>th</sup> July 2003**

## Brief Description of the Service:

The British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) is well known and established in the field of family placement and in childcare work. It provides high quality information, publications and training for carers, professionals and children as an "active, vocal professional association". BAAF states the purpose of the organisation is:

- "To promote and develop high standards in adoption and fostering for childcare, health, legal and other allied professionals.
- To promote public and professional understanding of adoption, fostering and the resulting life-long implications for children separated from their birth families, including their racial, cultural, religious and linguistic needs.
- To act as an independent voice in the field of childcare, to inform policymakers and legislators and all those responsible for the welfare of children and young people.
- To be an umbrella body which provides overall co-ordination and a concerted voice for all member agencies and all those working with children."

(BAAF Background Information – The Organisation)

The main activities of BAAF are the development, promotion and advocacy of best policy and practice, the provision of advice, information, training and consultancy in family placement and childcare. A child placement service is provided via the monthly newspaper Be My Parent. There are plans to develop this additionally as a Website service. BAAF hold the records of 53 adopted children placed through the British Adoption Project (BAP). BAAF provides an intermediary service, adoption counselling and general counselling on adoption issues to those involved in the project.

BAAF also operates the Adoption Register for England and Wales on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales and the DfES.

# SUMMARY

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

This is the second inspection by the Commission of BAAF as an adoption agency. Before the inspection fieldwork took place, supporting documentary evidence was received and read by the inspector. Questionnaires specific to BAAF were received from 6 subscribers to Be My Parent, 4 agencies, which have used Be My Parent and 2 advisors to the organisation.

One inspector undertook the inspection on 23<sup>rd</sup> November at BAAF's head office in Saffron House, London. Senior and front line staff from the organisation were interviewed. Personnel files were seen and the premises and archive storage were also inspected.

The inspection was well organised. All the necessary documentation was available and staff were open and cooperative. The inspector appreciated the time and work that had been involved in organising the inspection, which allowed it to be undertaken smoothly and effectively. It was acknowledged with the Responsible Individual and the Manager that not all the standards apply to BAAF. Judgements have been made in relation to those standards applicable to the work of the agency. BAAF's role in shaping and influencing best practice in the field of family placement is recognised.

## **What the service does well:**

BAAF has a clear role in linking of theory and practice as well as in the development of good practice. It provides high quality information in the form of leaflets, publications and courses, which instruct and assist in the development of good practice. It has mechanisms in place that allow issues to be identified from practice and inform and influence policy, regulation and guidance. This role is undertaken with a firm grasp on the needs of the child with this focus being maintained throughout the organisation.

The management of the agency is good and allows an effective and efficient service. This was seen in the smooth change of the Chief Executive, allowing the continued functioning and operation of the agency.

The monitoring systems were well established and seen as effective and valued by staff.

Appraisal of staff was well integrated into the supervision and staffing procedures. This is an effective system, which identifies areas of development and was viewed by staff as useful in their professional development.

Despite being some distance from direct practice there was a real sense that children were at the heart of the agency. This was evident in the comment made by one member of staff that,

“The whole team shares in the successes for children”.

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

Since the last inspection there have been some changes in the structure of BAAF. The development of the post of Director – Child Placement has allowed a specific focus to develop on the Be My Parent newsletter and on the creation of an on-line version. The intention is to create a more responsive and quicker service to assist in the placement of children.

The development of the Training Resource Bank is an effective way to share training material and ensure it is updated and appropriate.

The business plan and strategy is now to be tri-annual rather than every five years. The previous strategy expressed in “Placing Children First” was a five-year strategy from 2003-2008. It is felt by senior managers that changes within the field of adoption take place and need to be reflected in the agency’s strategic development more rapidly than the five years allowed.

Work undertaken by BAAF in the development of a Post Qualifying accredited course focused on Family Placement has made a much needed contribution to the development of the skills of workers. The “translation” of these courses into the new Post Qualifying academic framework, applicable from September 2007, is now near fruition.

## **What they could do better:**

It is unfortunate that in the midst of some excellent work that the personnel files seen indicated deficiencies in the renewal of CRB checks, which had already been identified by the agency manager and the poor recording of telephone verification of references. These matters are now being addressed.

There are few complaints about BAAF and the way in which they are dealt with is appropriate. The compilation of complaints and the drawing together of the issues identified within one record would strengthen the system and identify trends and patterns.

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](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.



# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

## **CONTENTS**

Being Healthy - There are no NMS that map to this outcome

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)
- Adoptors 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)
- The agency safeguards and promotes the welfare of its service users (NMS 32)

**The Commission considers Standards 2, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 19, 24 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.**

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

2,5,15,19 and 24

Quality in this outcome area is adequate.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The appointment of staff prior to the receipt of their CRB check and the lack of current checks on existing staff raises a concern about the robust quality of the recruitment and vetting of staff.

## **EVIDENCE:**

BAAF runs an annual recruitment campaign called National Adoption Week, which aims to recruit people interested in adoption who can then be assessed by adoption agencies throughout the country. This work is evaluated annually by surveying the membership and by reviewing press and media coverage. The numbers are not available relating to how many formal applications were made as a result of the campaign. However, the Be My Parent newspaper was shown by the agency's statistics to have played a significant role in the

placement of at least 236 children in the year 2005 – 2006. BAAF is currently developing a web based online family finding service due to be launched in April 2007. This will provide an additional service for local authorities seeking permanent alternative family placements for children in their care. Staff had a clear focus on the needs of children. One commented that their commitment was to “minimise placement delay for children” and that,

“The whole team shares in the successes for the children”.

Those involved viewed the development of “Exchange Days” run by the National Adoption Register very positively and reference was made to how effective it was in establishing possible links for children in questionnaire received.

The standards relating to the assessment, panel functioning and approval of adopters are not applicable to this organisation. While BAAF does not approve adopters it does provide information in leaflets that stresses the importance of matching between children and adoptive families and therefore assists in this process.

BAAF have appointed an experienced and skilled manager as their Director - Child Placement. This role is also designated as the Agency Manager and there are suitable Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks in place in relation to her appointment. The process of renewal of CRB checks had not been established until the month prior to the inspection. This has led to the checks on current staff being over three years old. Staff this applies to have signed an undertaking that no offences have been committed while BAAF waits for the checks to be completed. The personnel records did not evidence the telephone verification of references being undertaken. Managers were clear that this was the practice, but there is a need for the recording to reflect this.

Suitably skilled and experienced staff work for the organisation and there are clear recruitment procedures. Due to the nature of the work undertaken there are occasions when there is a need to employ temporary staff, for example during National Adoption Week. The manager reported that these staff are not all CRB checked but do not have access to any confidential information and that any social work staff taken on during this period need to provide proof of a CRB check. Similarly the manager stated that due to the delay with CRB checks being returned new staff do start work but are not confirmed in their posts until a CRB check is received. Such staff do not have access to confidential or identifying information about children. Volunteers working on confidential material are all subject to CRB checks.

There is an effective complaints system in place and complaints are used to consider and evaluate the service. The approach and attitude of staff to complaints was open and considered. Due to the role of BAAF there are examples of complaints being made that actually relate to other organisations or local authorities. BAAF passes information on appropriately as well as

responding with sensitivity to the complainant. BAAF also uses issues that arise in this way to inform DfES of current practice or developments through their monthly meetings.

There were two complaints during the last year and information relating to them is stored on one file. However, the record is not compliant with the needs to establish a "complete record of all complaints made and how they are dealt with including the outcome." National Minimum Standard (NMS) 24.7 and in collating this information in line with NMS 27.6. The system would be strengthened by the development of this process.

# 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)
- Services are tailored to meet the needs of people affected by adoption (NMS 33)

## **The Commission considers Standards 6 and 33 the key standards to be inspected.**

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

6 and 18

Quality in this outcome area is good.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The publications and training provided by BAAF promotes and enhances secure adoptive placements.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Although BAAF does not work directly with adopters it does prepare and support adopters through publications, training and workshops. Some of the information received in questionnaires referred to the relevance and high quality of this work.

Some of NMS 18 refers to the role of specialist advisers on adoption panels, which is not relevant to BAAF. However, there are specialist advisors in BAAF's Development Team. These positions have a particular focus on Medical, Legal, Disability, Black and Minority Ethnic and Refugee issues. These advisors have appropriate skills and expertise, which are used in the development of the organisation and in advice to members.

# **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)
- Service users receive good quality services based on their needs (NMS 34)

**The Commission considers Standards 7, 8, 9 and 34 the key standards to be inspected.**

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

Quality in this outcome area is good.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. All the information considered demonstrated the organisations understanding of the lifelong implications of adoption and demonstrate the needs of children are at the forefront of adoption policy.

## **EVIDENCE:**

BAAF has a clearly stated recognition of the life long implications of adoption in all its work. There is specific recognition of this in the procedure for birth family members approaching the British Adoption Project.

Birth parents who contact BAAF are given information about Adoption Support Services and treated with respect and sensitivity. An example of a birth parent making a complaint provided evidence of the organisation's appropriate response and consideration of the issues involved.

BAAF supports and advises social workers about obtaining, where possible, the signature and agreement of birth parents when a child is going to be featured in Be My Parent. The approach of the organisation, as evidenced in forms and publications gives full recognition to the role of birth families and of the implications of adoption.

# 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)

**The Commission considers Standards 1, 3, 16, 21, 25 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.**

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

1,3,14,16,17,20,21,22,23,25, 27,30 and 31

Quality in this outcome area is good.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The organisation is managed effectively and efficiently at all levels. There are areas, which need to be improved and are currently being addressed by the new Director - Child Placement relating to personnel records.

## **EVIDENCE:**

A clear and appropriate statement of purpose is in place. The statement has been reviewed and now includes information about the Adoption Register, which cannot be inspected as BAAF manage the register on behalf of DfES. The statement of purpose was presented to and approved by the Trustees Meeting in October this year.

Information for adopters is available in the BAAF General Information Pack, which is sent out to enquirers. There are also articles in Be My Parent providing information about preparation, assessment and approval of adopters. Publications provide further information. Questionnaires indicated that adopters valued information from BAAF and found it informative and useful.

The manager of the adoption agency has considerable experience in family placement work in a variety of settings and of management. She has an NVQ level 4 in management. The creation of the position of Director – Child Placement has benefited BAAF in allowing this post to focus on the development of Be My Parent and its extension into an electronic provision. There was evidence that the organisation is run effectively and efficiently. There were a number of monitoring systems in place, including the use of questionnaires, the compilation of reports, regular supervision and annual appraisal. Staff viewed appraisal as a useful process. One said, "It gives a sense of direction for personal and professional development." Managers demonstrated a commitment to learning from feedback and in using monitoring to move the organisation forward.

Staff were positive about the experience of working for BAAF and saw it as a fair and competent employer. One referred to the organisation as being "really understanding about personal issues", another that they were "excellent at providing support." There was a sense of the people working together with an understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities. An administrative worker commented that she was clear about how far she would go in dealing with a query and was confident of matters being dealt with when passed to a manager. Staff saw BAAF as,

"a very good, pleasant (work place), where people care about each other. There's a clear sense of a BAAF identity."

Staff were confident that they would be prepared for the changes that will develop with the electronic Be My Parent and that managers would respond to staffing issues appropriately.

Training was viewed as important and clearly valued. Staff were able to attend a variety of appropriate courses, including those not provided by BAAF, although they felt it was difficult to find any of higher quality! The training



record was well maintained and directly linked with appraisal and supported by identified developmental needs. There was evidence from memorandum that staff were kept very well informed of changes and development in legislation and guidance.

The Training Resource Bank has been developed, which allows trainers to access information used by their colleagues and for the material to be kept up-to-date and monitored by the agency.

Work undertaken by BAAF personnel in the establishment of a Post Qualifying accredited course focused on Family Placement and the development of appropriate skills for those working in family placement and is vital in the development of good practice in this field of work. It is hoped that this will establish appropriate courses for practitioners and that this work will be used to directly inform and influence the placement of children.

The personnel files have been referred to under the Staying Safe outcome.

The adoption records held by BAAF relate to the British Adoption Project. They are currently being copied and when this is complete the copies will be stored securely at the Leeds office. The archive storage was in locked cabinets and the room was locked when the office is closed. Managers reported that there was a high quality response to risks of fire damage.

The premises were accessible and well suited to the purpose of the organisation.

# 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	
Standard No	Score
No NMS are mapped to this outcome	

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
Standard No	Score
7	4
8	N/A
9	3
34	N/A

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

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
Standard No	Score
No NMS are mapped to this outcome	

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
Standard No	Score
6	3
18	3
33	N/A

MANAGEMENT	
Standard No	Score
1	3
3	4
14	4
16	3
17	3
20	4
21	3
22	3
23	4
25	2
26	3
27	3
28	2
29	3
30	3
31	3

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

## 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
1	AD15	VAA 2003 5(3)	A robust system for the renewal of CRB checks every three years must be established.	30/11/06
2	AD19	VAA 2003 14(3)	All staff working for the agency must have a current CRB check in place requested by the agency.	30/11/06

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	AD15	Telephone verification of references should be clearly recorded on all personnel files as part of the recruitment process.
2	AD24	Information about complaints should be compiled to form a complete record including how the complaint is dealt with and the outcome.

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