



**Making Social Care
Better for People**

inspection report

ADOPTION SERVICE

Oldham MBC Adoption Service

**Civic Centre
West Street
Oldham
OL1 1UW**

Lead Inspector
Maureen Moore

Announced Inspection
12th March 2007 10:00 am

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 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	Oldham MBC Adoption Service
Address	Civic Centre West Street Oldham OL1 1UW
Telephone number	0161 911 4751
Fax number	0161 222 1111
Email address	socs.family.placement@oldham.gov.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Oldham M.B.C.
Name of Nominated manager (if applicable)	Jenny Whitmore
Type of registration	Local Auth Adoption Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 1st March 2004

Brief Description of the Service:

Oldham Metropolitan Borough's adoption service falls within the remit of the council's Children, Young People's and Families department.

The council offer the following adoption services:

- recruitment, preparation, assessment and approval of adopters
- matching adoptive parents to children
- approval of non-agency adopters
- independent support and counselling to birth parents and their families
- the assessment of children's needs in relation to permanent placements
- production of relevant reports for court
- support for children and adopters post-placement
- post-adoption contact
- counselling for adults who have been adopted.

Services to people wishing to adopt a child from overseas are referred to a voluntary agency, with which Oldham has a service level agreement for such work.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection took place in March 2007. It was the second time that Oldham Metropolitan Borough had been measured against the National Minimum Standards (NMS) and the Adoption Agencies Regulations (2003) (the regulations). However it was the first time that the agency had been assessed under the Adoption Agencies Regulations (2005) and the Adoption Support Services Regulations (2005) following the full implementation of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

A follow-up visit to the previous full inspection was undertaken in February 2006, where it was found that Oldham had responded positively to the issues highlighted in the report; many of the statutory requirements and good practice recommendations had been successfully addressed.

This inspection was well prepared for, with all required pre-inspection material produced as requested. The agency provided the best facilities available to them and people at all levels of the service were welcoming, helpful, open and informative. The programme that was arranged was well coordinated and very manageable. This enabled the inspection to be carried out with the minimum of disruption and maximum efficiency.

The inspection was carried out over four days, with one extra-day being allocated to the observation of the adoption panel. Interviews were held with key managers and staff during the course of the fieldwork. The independent chairperson of the adoption panel was interviewed, as was the cabinet member with responsibility for children young people and families. An examination of staff and panel members' personnel files was undertaken.

Visits were made to four adoptive families, and telephone interviews were held with two people who had been in receipt of adoption support services. The views of service users are incorporated into the text of this report. Completed questionnaires were received from adopters/prospective adopters (8), placing social workers (3), and specialist advisers (2).

No birth parent or family member was able to contribute to this inspection.

The case files of all service users who were interviewed were read, as were children's adoption files. Other case files were also examined. Written materials relating to the operation of the agency were read, including policies and procedures, protocols and information provided for children, prospective and approved adopters and social workers.

The inspection also considered the council's arrangements for adoption support services and interviewed staff involved in the assessment, review and provision of these services. The inspection also took place shortly after a full inspection

of the fostering and private fostering services in Oldham. Readers may find it helpful to consider all three reports for a full overview of the family placement service to looked after children in the town.

What the service does well:

Oldham employs experienced, knowledgeable and committed social work staff and managers across the service. The service manager for family placement, although only recently in post, clearly knows the service and has firm ideas as to how to drive forward continual improvement. There was evidence of good collaboration with her (also recently appointed) colleague in the fieldwork services in terms of developing more consistent permanency planning processes.

There is a clear commitment across the agency, from the elected members (across parties) to the officers of the council, to ensuring the best outcomes for children who have adoption as their plan. The elected members have demonstrated this clearly by investing £800,000, which will be sustained year on year for safeguarding children's welfare.

The adoption team had experienced some problems brought about by the absence, due to illness, of the team manager. The senior practitioner had stepped into the breach on a temporary basis, and it is to her and the team's credit that service provision has been maintained despite the challenge of implementing the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

There is a thorough preparation and assessment process, of which adopters mainly spoke positively: "[our social worker] was professional and personable"; "[the home study] was challenging ... but it is important to understand how we've got to where we are"; "our form F was very good [our social worker] really understood us" were some of the comments received.

The agency has produced a good range of written information for anyone who has an interest in adoption, and all literature is made available in other languages and formats on request.

There was evidence of good communication across the service, particularly in relation to the creation of the new department. Staff and managers demonstrated that they understood the vision for future services, and that they were consulted about it.

The inspection confirmed that Oldham has sound recruitment and selection practices, which ensure that vulnerable children and adults are safeguarded.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Oldham is on course to establish its children's trust arrangement for April 2008. It has reconfigured its services accordingly and has established the Children, Young People's and Families department. This should serve to develop more co-ordinated services at the point of delivery, which would have a positive impact on adopted children and their families.

The service now has separate fostering and adoption teams and has created and appointed to two new posts of service managers for family placement and the children's fieldwork teams. Adoption now has a stronger profile and there is clearer strategic and operational accountability within the management structure.

The agency has produced a recruitment strategy for potential adopters, the efficacy of which is reviewed annually. They have recently advertised the post of a recruitment officer, with a view to the more targeted approach linked to the detailed analysis of needs of children awaiting adoptive families.

Oldham has reviewed its provision for those people who want to adopt children from overseas. This service is now commissioned via a service level agreement with a local voluntary agency.

What they could do better:

Adopters' assessment reports were found to be variable in quality. This was also borne out by comments from some adopters: "our Form F was poorly written ... and fundamental information ... [was] incorrect". The managers of the service demonstrated an awareness of some of the quality issues, and had developed plans to address them. Adopters' attitudes towards issues of diversity should be explored and analysed in more depth.

The quality of children's permanence reports is in need of improvement; some were very poor. The agency's approach to involving birth parents and families more fully in the permanency planning process should be reviewed, as there was very little evidence of such involvement in the cases looked at during the inspection.

The service should develop clear processes for ensuring equity for all children who have adoption as their plan, particularly in the case of concurrent placements.

Oldham needs to develop fully, and implement its adoption support service strategy. Currently, this is reactive and not planned within a framework. The agency needs to develop clear policies and procedures for the assessment of need (including financial) in adoption support cases.

The safeguarding policy must be amended to include specific reference to children placed for adoption and guidance in relation to historical abuse. The

policy must also outline the protocol for joint working in adoption support cases.

Personnel files on all panel members must contain all information as listed in the Schedules.

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. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

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)
- 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, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 19, 32.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

Oldham provides a good range of adoption placements for its children, based on their assessed needs and underpinned by sound matching policies and practice.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Oldham rarely places children with its own adopters, due to the small geographical area. There is a clearly written recruitment strategy for adopters, which is evaluated annually and which is mainly geared towards meeting the

needs of children awaiting adoption placements within the boundaries of the Greater Manchester consortium, and the Adoption 22 group of local authorities. The recruitment of adopters in the twelve months prior to the inspection clearly reflected the demographic make up of the borough. At the time of the inspection the service was about to advertise for a recruitment officer with a view to a more targeted approach based on the analysis of the needs of children, which would increase the numbers of inter-agency placements and reduce the timescales of adopters waiting for a match.

Oldham provides a safe adoption service; staff demonstrated a clear knowledge of the safeguarding policies and procedures. However, the policy needs revising to include specific reference to children placed for adoption as well as guidance in relation to historical abuse.

The service has good matching procedures and practice, which is reflected by the fact there had been no disrupted placements in the year preceding the inspection.

There is a clearly set out assessment and preparation programme, the frequency of which has increased due to Oldham linking up with a neighbouring authority to put on joint training for first time adopters. There are plans also to introduce separate programmes for second time adopters, with the same authority. These plans are timely, as some adopters had said they would welcome the opportunity.

Adopters were mainly positive about the training and preparation process. Those who expressed a view also commented positively on the professionalism and sensitivity of their social workers whilst undertaking the home study. There was evidence of some very good work with an adopted child who had been very well prepared and fully involved in the second time assessment process. This child was keen for their views to be made known to the inspectors, saying that "Oldham is great".

However, one adopter commented that they thought the social workers might benefit from training in presentation skills, and another said that attachment and identity issues should be covered in more depth.

There was evidence of CRB and other statutory checks being undertaken and recorded on file. However, there was evidence of some delays in the administrative processes, examples of which were an application form not being acknowledged and delay in a CRB form being sent off.

Timescales from initial enquiry to panel comply with practice guidance, which demonstrates the efficiency of the assessment process; it is clear that the completion of assessments in a timely manner is embedded in the practice of the service. Adopters said that they were made aware of the date of the panel at which their application would be heard, at the beginning of the home study.

The quality of adopters' assessment reports is variable, ranging from very good to adequate. There was evidence to confirm that some social workers who clearly have good assessment skills, had difficulty translating them into the reports. The reports need to be more evidence based in relation to applicants' life experiences and how these inform the capacity to parent. One adopter commented that their form F was very good; "a true reflection of us". Another however said that they thought their report was "very poorly written". One good report linked a couple's abilities to the Every Child Matters outcomes, so there was clear indication of their skills. The managers are aware of these issues and have planned some training to address them. The service should consider using contemporaneous notes from home studies to use as a supervision tool, as well as introducing a mid-assessment review to aid quality assurance earlier in the process.

Equality and diversity issues should be more consistently and comprehensively addressed. Applicants' attitudes to race and culture should be analysed more, and the service should ensure that disability and sexuality are also included.

The agency also needs to ensure that all information on children for adopters is current and shared in a timely and appropriate manner, as discrepancy was found during the inspection.

The quality of children's permanence reports (CPRs) is not consistent. Some were very poor. The service managers confirmed that they are developing a permanency planning policy which will include training for staff in writing these reports. This is timely, as the writing of these reports should be an integral part of the planning process, not a separate piece of work produced at the end. The service should also consider whether the team managers might benefit from refresher training in the supervision of CPRs. There was some evidence of reports being signed off by managers that were later thought not to be good enough by the panel.

Also, there was no evidence on either the adopters or children's assessments of how they had been supervised under the restricted practice regulations; the service should include this in panel papers.

The permanence strategy should include clear processes for ensuring equity for all children who have adoption as their plan, particularly in the case of concurrent placements, which at present are commissioned to a local voluntary agency. There was evidence that not all staff were aware of the criteria for such placements, and evidence that a baby who might have benefited from this type of plan had not been considered.

Oldham has a properly constituted panel, which is chaired by a person who is independent of the agency. The panel comprises relevantly qualified and experienced people, and all have CRB clearance. All panel members undergo

annual appraisals; this is good practice as it allows the service to monitor performance and identify any developmental needs, as well as elicit feedback on operational matters.

At present the panel has no formal mechanism for commenting on the quality of the work put before it. It is recommended that a simple format be introduced so that each panel member has the opportunity to raise issues on each report. This would add to the qualitative feedback given to the service.

Adopters spoke positively of their experiences of panel, although workers across the service were less enthusiastic. It was suggested that the service might benefit from a joint development day for panel members and social workers. The panel might also consider introducing a mechanism by which social workers and applicants can provide feedback on their experiences at panel.

There are very clear written policies on the panel procedures and adopters are given the opportunity to attend. The panel is efficiently organised and the minutes are of a high standard. Agency decisions are made in a timely manner, but the written notifications are not routinely sent within timescales and in one case (twice), not at all.

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):

Quality in this outcome area is **adequate**.

Oldham's adoption support service is still in development. This means that services are reactive rather than planned. The agency should develop fully and implement its strategy for adoption support.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Oldham's adoption support strategy is still in development. However, adopters had much praise for their individual workers. There is an adoption support group, and the borough funds 12 month membership of Adoption UK. There are plans to introduce a newsletter, and annual family celebration days. The service is also in the process of developing a programme of post-adoption training, in response to requests from adopters.

Discussion with managers and staff of the adoption team revealed a commitment to working with adopters to provide stable and permanent homes for children who have adoption as their plan.

There was evidence of some outstanding Schedule 2 counselling, of which the recipient said: "an excellent service ... if I hadn't had [the worker's] support, I wouldn't have carried on".

Discussion with adopters revealed that the agency is very good at emphasising the importance of keeping safe any information relating to a child's birth heritage. All those spoken to, demonstrated this either by their understanding for the need of ongoing contact, or of the importance of their children's life-story work.

The life chances team offers support to adopters, which has been well received, but it is a reactive service and not part of a co-ordinated approach.

The adoption support policy needs to map out the strategic aims as well as the whole range of services and resources that will be available. It should be underpinned by clear policies and procedures, and encompass the comprehensive assessment framework. This will make it easier for work to be carried out in a solution-focused and time limited way and maximise the efficiency to both adoptive families and the service as a whole.

Policies and procedures for the support service must include clear guidance on the protocol for joint working of adoption support cases where there are safeguarding issues within the family.

The service has access to good legal and medical advice, although there was some evidence of delays in getting adoption medicals. This affects the ability to get papers to panel on time, and has the knock-on effect of hindering the implementation of children's plans. The managers need to resolve this issue with the medical adviser.

There are written protocols specialist advisers, which are kept on their panel files.

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):

7, 8, 9, 34.

Quality in this outcome area is **poor**. The service does not enable birth parents to participate in the care planning processes for their children, resulting in a lack of meaningful information being available for some children in later life.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Oldham does have written strategy for working with birth parents and their families. Discussion with staff across the service indicated their recognition of the life-long implications of adoption for all concerned. However, there was very little evidence of birth parent involvement in the care planning process or of their views and wishes for their children being recorded. Child care social workers said that they lacked specific training in this area of work, although the service managers were developing a permanency planning strategy which would incorporate the training and development needs of social workers.

This is timely, because if the agency is unable to engage with birth parents and families at the onset, and valuable information is not gathered early enough, by the time the support worker becomes involved vital information is already lost – and with it a part of a child's heritage.

Oldham has a service level agreement with a local voluntary agency through which it provides independent counselling for birth parents and their families. This service offers counselling and help with indirect contact. Oldham should ensure that qualitative and quantitative monitoring of the take-up of this service occurs regularly. Although leaflets are available for birth families, the agency needs to ensure a more pro-active and ongoing promotion of the services available.

There is an expectation that life-story work is completed by the time a match and subsequent placement is made, which social workers are required to submit to panel. The independent reviewing officers also monitor the progress of life-story work, and report to managers if there is delay. However, it is unclear who is responsible for overseeing the content and quality of this work. There was again little evidence of birth family contribution, which is crucial in helping children formulate and maintain a positive self-identity as well as helping them to reflect on and understand their history.

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, 26, 27, 28, 29.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. The adoption service is well managed, and there is a clear commitment at all levels of the service for the delivery of good outcomes for children who have adoption as their plan.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Oldham's Statement of Purpose has been updated and approved by the executive: it complies with the NMS and the regulations. The children's guide is also compliant. Both of these documents are available in different formats such as Braille, audiotape and large print on request; they can also be translated into other languages on request.

There is very clearly set out information for enquirers, which adopters found to be delivered "very promptly" and which they found "very useful".

All service users are welcomed without prejudice, and all written information provided by the agency is available in the predominant minority languages of the area, which ensures access to all.

Oldham's newly established department for Children, Young People and Families (CYP&F) has been a positive development and the aim of delivering a fully integrated service at the point of delivery is on target for April 2008. The service director demonstrated strong leadership as well as a sound knowledge of strategic and operational issues across the service.

There was much evidence of the CYP&F cabinet member's commitment to the corporate parenting role of the council, which is excellent and aims to ensure good outcomes for children are supported across the service. The sustained year-on-year investment of £800,000 for ensuring safeguarding standards is a good example of this. He confirmed that he receives very regular management information that he questions as appropriate. He meets with the executive and service directors weekly, which means that he and his colleagues are fully acquainted with service development. The cabinet member and senior managers confirmed that there is a positive and open approach to the monitoring of activity across the service.

The manager of the permanency team had been in post in an "acting-up" capacity for a very short while prior to the inspection. She is clearly knowledgeable about the service, including its strengths and the challenges it faces. She has maintained the improvements in service delivery that were apparent at the follow-up visit, following the previous inspection. The agency expects to fill the post in the foreseeable future. It is essential that this be fulfilled so that plans for further improving the service can be implemented and monitored effectively. Lines of accountability are clear throughout the service as are roles and responsibilities. It is notable that the service has managed to sustain steady improvement at a time of great legislative change and in the absence of a team manager.

The independent reviewing officers (IROs) demonstrated excellent knowledge of the adoption service, and good monitoring of the permanency process; there is a 'notice of concern' system in place whereby the IROs inform the relevant managers if there are any issues of delay or poor quality of work. They praised the commitment of the work done by the adoption team in finding placements for children who are harder to place, and gave an example of an "excellent service" to a sibling group of four children. They also said that "so many staff in Oldham will go the extra mile" in securing good quality placements.

The creation and subsequent appointments to the posts of service managers, for family placement and the service to children and families have had a very positive impact on the adoption service. There was evidence of collaborative working between the service managers, to ensure greater consistency in permanency planning processes.

The service manager for family placement, although only in post a short while, demonstrated a sound strategic overview of the service, and has set up systems that should ensure continued improvements to the quality assurance of the work.

Recording in adopters' case files is good, and there was evidence of regular file auditing. Timescales are monitored by managers and the panel, and the need for assessments to be undertaken in a timely manner is embedded in the service. Care should be taken to ensure that all records are signed, dated and that the author's designation is clearly stated. Any references to third parties should include their full names and designation. Any case decisions taken during supervision should always be placed on file.

Children's adoption files do not meet the regulations; there was evidence that some children's social workers are unsure about what should be included and what should be left out. It is recommended that the agency consider training and development for social workers in this area of work. It is of utmost importance that these files reflect an accurate record of all work undertaken in relation to the adoption, which will be readily understood by the adoptee at any future date.

Staff personnel files were well-ordered and meet the regulations; panel members' files, however do not. The service must ensure that these files are made compliant.

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	1
8	1
9	2
34	2

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

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
33	2

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

No

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.	AD11 AD28	15 (2003) Schedules 3 & 4	Personnel files on all panel members must contain all information as listed in the Schedules.	30/07/07
2.	AD32	AAR(2003) (as amended)	The safeguarding policy must be amended to include specific reference to children placed for adoption and guidance in relation to historical abuse. The policy must also outline the protocol for joint working in adoption support cases.	30/07/07
3	AD6	ASS(2005)	The agency must produce and implement a clear strategy for adoption support services.	30/07/07
4	AD25	AAR(2005)	The agency must ensure that all children for whom adoption is the plan, has properly set out and well maintained files as laid down by the regulation.	30/07/07

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 service should consider using workers' contemporaneous notes as a supervision tool. The service should also consider introducing mid-assessment reviews. Issues of equality and diversity should be consistently and comprehensively addressed.
2	AD5	<p>The service should ensure that all information on children and their backgrounds is current and shared appropriately with adopters.</p> <p>The service should ensure that children's social workers' training and development needs are addressed in relation to all aspect of permanency planning.</p>
3	AD5 AD8	The service should develop a system of monitoring the quality of life-story work for children who have adoption as their plan.
4	AD7	The service should ensure that birth parents are more fully involved in the care planning process. The service should also ensure that birth families have the opportunity to comment on what is written about them or their circumstances, before information is passed to the adoption panel or to the adopters.
5	AD10	The service should introduce a format to facilitate formal feedback to the agency on the quality of work put before it. It should also consider eliciting feedback from social workers and applicants on their experiences of panel.
6	AD18	The service should resolve the issue of delays in getting medical adoptions in a timely manner.
7	AD25	The agency should make more robust its quality assurance systems across the service, including the careful supervision of adopters' assessments and children's permanence reports.
8	AD25	The agency should ensure that any case decisions made during supervision are recorded on file, and actions recorded.
9	AD25	The agency should ensure that all entries on files are typewritten, signed (with designation) and dated. Any references to third parties should include full names and

		role.
10	AD33	The service should develop clear processes for ensuring equity for all children who have adoption as their plan, particularly in the case of concurrent placements.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

North West Regional Office

11th Floor

West Point

501 Chester Road

Old Trafford

M16 9HU

National Enquiry Line:

Telephone: 0845 015 0120 or 0191 233 3323

Textphone: 0845 015 2255 or 0191 233 3588

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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