



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

ADOPTION SERVICE

St Helens Council Adoption Service

**73 Corporation Street
St Helens
WA10 1SX**

Lead Inspector
Jayne Ivory

Announced Inspection
17th January 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 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 St Helens Council Adoption Service

Address 73 Corporation Street
St Helens
WA10 1SX

Telephone number 01744 456526

Fax number 01744 456551

Email address

Provider Web address

Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable) St Helens Council

Name of registered manager (if applicable) Mrs Christine Taylor

Type of registration Local Auth Adoption Service

Category(ies) of registration, with number of places

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection This is the first inspection against National Minimum Standards and Local Authority Adoption Regulations.

Brief Description of the Service:

At the time of the inspection St Helens Adoption Service was located in a combined fostering and adoption Family Placement Team. The agency undertakes the recruitment, preparation, assessment and approval of domestic adopters. Those who wish to adopt a child from overseas are signposted to a local Voluntary Adoption Agency, which is registered to undertake inter-country adoption assessments. St Helens offers a range of adoption support services, administers indirect contact arrangements and undertakes family finding for those children for whom adoption is the plan. Independent support for birth parents and families and intermediary services were arranged through a service level agreement with a local adoption support agency.

St Helens had recently reviewed the adoption service and had sought to enhance the service provided to children and their families by developing a child placement strategy. The service was in the early stages of implementing the strategy that involved the development of a separate adoption team with a dedicated team manager.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection was well prepared for with all required pre-inspection material being forwarded as requested. The agency provided the best facilities available to them and engaged in the process as willing participants. 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 three days, with an extra half-day being allocated to provide formal feedback to the Director of Children's Services and other key managers of the adoption service in St Helens. During the course of the fieldwork interviews were held with key managers and staff, specialist advisers and an elected member of the council. An examination of personnel files was undertaken in the offices of Human Resources.

Visits were made to four adoptive families and their views are incorporated into the text of this report. Completed questionnaires were received from adopters/prospective adopters (12), placing social workers (4), placing authorities (1) and specialist advisers (2). Two questionnaires sent to birth families were returned.

The case files of the adopters visited were read – and the adoption files of children placed with them. 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 prospective and approved adopters.

What the service does well:

St Helens adoption service is child-focused and provides good outcomes for children who are placed for adoption within the resources available. The small numbers of children waiting and the prioritisation of children's needs through the matching and placement process provided evidence of this.

St Helens ensures that prospective adopters are informed, prepared and assessed safely and thoroughly.

Adopters confirmed that they were welcomed without prejudice and that St Helens prompt and personal response to enquiries from adopters gave them confidence in the service. "We contacted other agencies in the area and they didn't get back to us, you don't want to leave a message on a answer phone about something so important. St Helens responded to us personally and sent us information very quickly."

The service provides good quality initial information and a service specific adopter's handbook, which details the whole process for adopters. The majority of adopters confirmed that they were well supported by their social worker who made the assessment a clear and transparent process. These are some of the comments made by adopters about the service they had received: "We are very pleased with the service we have received..." and "I find the staff very helpful...the questions I am unsure about I will ask and my social worker will sort it out for me."

The service has access to specialist advisers who ensure that children are well prepared for their adoptive placements, with support continuing if and when required.

St Helens has an effective adoption panel, which is independently chaired. Adoption Panels are timely and ensure that the work of the service is scrutinised against National Standards for Adoption and against the timescales implemented by the Adoption and Children Act.

St Helens has a small but effective post adoption support service. The Adoption Support Worker has developed networks with other agencies in the authority to ensure that children and families can access support as and when required. The Adoption Support Worker ensures that the council's information exchange is managed in a sensitive and proactive way.

The service also invites adopters waiting and with a placement to attend ongoing adoption support groups. The managers of the service keep the developing adoption support service under regular review.

The adoption service benefits from knowledgeable and committed staff who enjoy positive working relationships across the service. The agency places a great deal of emphasis on professional development. There were clear links between the quality of service delivery and the ability of social workers in the

adoption and fieldwork teams to access good quality and relevant training. Many child-care social workers have received training in permanence planning, communicating with children and life story work. One social worker said " I only qualified 18 months ago and I think that I have had access to good quality training to help me understand my key role and responsibilities in planning for a child to become adopted. I know what a good form e should include and what life story work should contain. I may not always be able to do the best job I can because of pressures of time and my other cases, but at least I know the standards that I should be aspiring to."

St Helens Recruitment and Fostering and Adoption Permanency team benefits from a skilled and knowledgeable team manager who is well supported by the service manager.

Evidence of the need to enhance the adoption service provided by St Helens had been recognised by the team and service managers. The agency had commissioned an independent review of the work of the adoption service and was in the early stages of implementing the recommendations of the report. The service is well monitored, with established reporting mechanisms that feed into the wider organisation.

What has improved since the last inspection?

This is the first time that the agency has been inspected against National Minimum Standards and Local Authority Adoption Agency Regulations.

What they could do better:

St Helens has acknowledged that the existing resources available to adoption were not adequate to meet the needs of children and adults in the service. Standards regarding the timeliness of adopter's assessments and implementation of care plans for children with a plan for adoption were found to have suffered due to conflicting pressures on social workers and inadequate management time.

The service has systems to monitor delay, however the social worker and manager were not always been able to satisfactorily evidence why some significant delays had taken place. Unacceptable delay was found in the placement of relinquished babies. Relinquished babies move straight into the Adoption Permanency Team and become the responsibility of the child-care social workers in the team. As one adopter said:
"Our child was placed with us at 9 months of age, why did it take so long when they were relinquished... we love our child so much but are sad that we have missed out on so much of their early development."

The manager commented that the existing resources in the team did not allow for the support of concurrent placements of children with some legal uncertainty. The service had acknowledged the need to increase staff and management support for a range of placements that would contribute to the avoidance of unnecessary delay for all children.

There was also evidence that the team was under resourced and that social workers and managers of the Recruitment and Fostering and Adoption Permanency Team were all "wearing too many hats" as one social worker succinctly put it.

Some adopters assessments were not progressed as quickly as they should have been, and some support to adopters who had recently been matched and had a child placed was not of a good enough standard. The service should develop quality assurance and file audits of adopters and children's adoption files. The manager should also ensure that decisions made in supervision are recorded on the adopters or children's adoption files. The service must implement the children's placement strategy for the adoption service within the given timescale.

St Helens adoption service has inadequate dedicated administrative support for the adoption service and an arrangement for panel administration that contributes to delay in the production of adoption panel minutes. The service would benefit if the role of panel administrator was brought into the adoption team and from an increase in administrative support.

The service must review the current arrangements for indexing and archiving adoption records in accordance with regulations and standards. The current arrangements are inadequate and they do not allow for adoption records to be stored securely and safely and retrieved efficiently.

Some adoption records are kept in the Adoption Permanency teams office base. The office premises are overcrowded and are not fit for purpose. St Helens are proposing to re-house the adoption team next year. It is recommended that the managers and staff of the adoption service should be consulted throughout the design and allocation of office space for the service.

St Helens must ensure that staff working for the purposes of the adoption service and adoption panel members' files meet the necessary regulations and standards.

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)
- 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)

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

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

St Helens prioritises the needs of children with a plan for adoption, however existing staffing resources must be enhanced in order to ensure that all children with a plan for adoption are placed with their adoptive families in timely way.

EVIDENCE:

St Helens had developed a recruitment strategy to recruit sufficient adopters to meet the needs of children waiting for adoption locally. The service had sought to prioritise children needs and had stopped all further recruitment of adopters for 12 months prior to the inspection as they had recognised that they had ten families waiting and wanted to prioritise family finding activity over recruitment.

The service had developed clear and effective matching policies and procedures that were implemented in practice. The adoption panel played a role in monitoring the progress of children's cases and the timeliness of care plans. The Team Manager in the adoption service ensured that children's plans for adoption were kept under review from the point of best interest, however

there was a need to develop tracking systems for children's permanence plans at an earlier stage . There was evidence to suggest that although children's needs were very much at the centre of the service that care planning for some children was delayed unacceptably by a reactive rather than a proactive approach. This was most telling in the cases of two relinquished babies. The team manager confirmed that she did not have the staffing resources available in the team at the moment to ensure that children could be placed with their adoptive families from birth, given the extra support these placements can need. In one of the cases that were tracked complex legal issues had undoubtedly contributed to the delay.

There was evidence that the service will continue to need to place a number of babies either relinquished or non-relinquished. This is an area that must be improved upon.

Children's assessments were mixed in quality and this was an area that the service and the panel kept under constant review. The Team Manager met with her colleagues in the child-care teams in order to provide training and updates about quality and content of children's assessments. The inspection found evidence that the wishes of children and their birth families were not always ascertained during the child's assessment. There was substantial evidence that the wide variations in practice had been exacerbated by staff turnover in the child-care teams. The service had acknowledged the need to provide constant training in children's assessments given the turnover of staff in the child-care teams.

The Recruitment and Fostering and Adoption Permanency Team were responsible for sending out initial information to adopters and then conducted individual visits or mini-assessments on applicants before they moved onto the preparation training.

Adopters confirmed that St Helens were effective at sending out information in a timely way. The initial visit process was an opportunity for sharing information and for starting the pre-application checks. The beginning of the process worked well, many adopters confirming that they had received a quick, sensitive and professional service at the outset.

The service placed an emphasis on evidencing the ability of adopters to provide safe care for children. There was evidence of a comprehensive health and safety checklist that had been completed with adopters as part of the approval process. The full range of references, including references from previous partners, older children (where appropriate) and employer's references were on file. The assessing social worker would benefit from providing some analysis of the weight that should be given to each of the references as part of the assessment.

Staff confirmed that they had accessed recent training in safeguarding children placed for adoption and were able to refer to a service specific child protection policy and procedure for safeguarding children in adoption placements. Prospective and approved adopters confirmed that they had access to good, informative preparation training that had helped them to understand the issues surrounding adoption. The recruitment social worker in the team delivered preparation training and ensured that training was evaluated after each session. The service had acknowledged that the annual review of training was overdue given the planned absence of the responsible social worker.

The preparation training and the assessments of adopters would benefit from addressing the full range of issues concerning diversity in adoption. The ability of adopters to challenge all forms of discrimination should also be more considered in the prospective adopters assessments.

Many adopters confirmed that the home study had been completed with skill and sensitivity by their assessing social worker. These are some of the comments made by prospective adopters:

"we really trusted our social worker, they were always here when they said they would be...even though the assessment was hard work we felt supported throughout" and "our social worker was very professional, we knew what was expected of us". Some of the case files read indicated significant delay in the progression of some adopter's assessments. This was evidence of inadequate staffing resource in the service and a lack of dedicated management time to monitor timeliness and quality of support in specific cases.

One adopter commented that " It's taken over two years to get approved, we know that there were some issues about our health, but these should have been dealt with in a few months...in the end I spoke to the Team Manager and they sorted it out."

The Team Manager undertook a second worker visit at the end of the assessment, which was recorded and used as part of the assessment. The adoption agency benefits from experienced and knowledgeable staff who were well supported by the adoption team manager. The adoption team manager and service manager for the agency demonstrated knowledge and experience of the strategic and operational challenges of managing the agency. The Adoption Letterbox was well organised and managed by the Adoption Support Worker.

The agency has an Adoption Panel that had recently been reconstituted. The panel demonstrated sound practice concerning the quality assurance and scrutiny of all assessments and reports. The panel has an experienced and suitably qualified independent panel chairperson. The service had developed a reciprocal arrangement with two other neighbouring authorities to provide a service manager to chair the adoption panel. This is an innovative arrangement and it is recommended that the agency decision maker in St Helens meet

regularly with the independent panel chairperson to ensure feedback for the service but also to keep this arrangement under review.

Adopters were welcomed at panel. The adoption panel had recently changed the venue of the panel to provide a more sympathetic environment to those attending. Social workers considered that the panel was “challenging, but fair and very child focused.”

Minutes of the panel had been subject to review. The most recent minutes of the panel were very clear and recorded the reasons for any recommendations made. The system for panel administration was somewhat unwieldy and it is a recommendation that the adoption service has their own dedicated adoption panel administrator in order to avoid the current delays in the preparation of minutes. The Agency Decision Maker had recently come into post and was committed to their role. Decisions had been made in a timely way however it is a recommendation that the standard letter concerning the agency decision should be amended and should be sent from the Agency Decision Maker and signed by them.

The service must ensure that safe staff recruitment and selection procedures are implemented and evidenced for all staff working for the purposes of the adoption service. This includes administrative staff in the adoption service.

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

St Helens has a developing and integrated adoption support service which ensures that children and their adoptive families are supported throughout childhood.

EVIDENCE:

St Helens had recognised the need to develop their own post placement and post adoption support service, in addition to commissioning services from other agencies.

Practices concerning assessments for post adoption support were seen to be well developed in the service.

The Adoption Support Worker played a key role in ensuring that children and their adoptive families accessed ongoing support services. There was evidence that the social worker in this post had developed networks in the area and region to ensure that children and their adoptive families received ongoing support.

Post approval and post adoption support groups were well established and well supported.

One child and their adoptive family had received continuity of support to help prepare them for placement and then to help them move into their placement. As one social worker said " They have been really helped by the work that the NSPCC have done with the child to help prepare them for the adoption placement.... This work is ongoing and continues to mean that the child and her adoptive family can get the support that they need from someone that they know."

St Helens benefits from excellent access and support from the medical adviser who ensures children's and adopters medical reports are scrutinised before panel. They are also available to offer advice and support to adopters concerning any proposed match. Legal advice to the service is also accessible. The support services are very effective within the available resources, however access to CAMHS services is an area that needs to be addressed for children and their adoptive families. Further to this the whole area of post adoption support for all those touched by adoption is an ever growing area which must continue to be kept under constant review by the managers in the service. The manager is working with the regional group to develop a consistent written protocol and agreement for specialist advisers to the agency.

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

Birth parents and birth families are supported by the service, but more needs to be done to ensure that birth families are actively involved in the adoption plans for children.

EVIDENCE:

St Helens needed to do more to ensure that birth parents and their families were involved in adoption plans, however a number of forms e did give an account of birth families views on the child's assessments, although not many forms e were signed or provided evidence of when birth parents had been told about the plan.

The Permanency Team played a key role in ensuring that life story work was undertaken and completed in a timely way. There was an expectation that adopters would meet birth parents before the placement of a child. There was some evidence of very creative and sensitive work taking place in the team to ensure that birth parents were supported. Social workers had worked with the adoptive family and child to take a video of the child as part of the indirect contact arrangements. The Adoption Support Worker had then ensured that the birth parents had access to a video machine so they could look at the video.

The Team Manager of the Permanency Team worked hard with her colleagues in the child-care teams to ensure that staff were aware of the need to preserve and maintain a child's heritage, however more must be done at a strategic level to ensure that the work to support and enable birth parents and their families to contribute to their child's plans for adoption.

St Helens needs to develop a service wide strategy to supporting birth parents and their families to ensure that some of the current good practice is further developed and is shared with other partner agencies.

The managers of the service were in the process of reviewing the service level agreement with After Adoption to ensure value for money and good outcomes for service users.

Indirect contact arrangements (letterbox) were well managed by the service with a conscientious approach that indicated a commitment to this important aspect of post-adoption work.

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):

St Helens had an adoption service that had been compromised by a lack of dedicated staff and management time. The service had acknowledged this and must ensure the effective implementation of the child placement strategy to improve the service to all touched by adoption.

EVIDENCE:

There was a statement of purpose in place that had been reviewed in July 2005 and had been formally approved by the executive of the council. It clearly outlined the aspirations and operations of the agency and was written in an easy to read style. The statement of purpose had been developed in consultation with staff in the service. The children's guide to adoption was well presented and gave a realistic overview of the issues involved; it also provided contact details of other relevant agencies and explained how a child could complain. When the children's guide is reviewed it should contain the correct title and information of the Commission for Social Care Inspection. The policies and procedures of the agency, many of which were being reviewed and revised to accommodate the Adoption and Children Act, supported the statement of purpose and most indications were that the agency operated in line with these. The information provided for prospective applicants is of a very good standard; it gives a clear indication of all the implications and processes of adoption, including profiles of the kind of children requiring placements, and it also specifies the range of people that the agency wishes to recruit. It is a very well - presented pack that is welcoming and clearly aimed at providing all relevant information in an accessible and encouraging format.

The operational and strategic management of the adoption service had been compromised by the structure of the service and a lack of staff resources, as one social worker said "We are wearing too many hats, the demands of the fostering service have dominated the team, particularly the friends and family assessments." and "we have been well supported by our manager, but family finding is an ever growing task." Additional pressure on the service had been generated by the vacancy of the fostering team manager, this post had been filled, but the demands on the team manager to cover the span of the service had contributed to a more reactive style of management of the adoption service. The service had acknowledged the need to enhance dedicated staffing resources to the adoption service. The council had approved the proposals in the child placement strategy and the adoption team was to get an additional social worker, administrator and team manager. The need to implement the child placement strategy to provide more management time for the service is a priority for the service.

The Adoption Team reported that they were well supported by their manager, and the manager involved in the adoption service reported that they were well supervised and supported by the Service Manager.

All managers involved in the adoption service were suitably qualified and experienced. The Adoption Team worked well within the wider constraints of the service and the relationship between the team and placing social workers

was very positive. Despite the pressure on the Team Manager she still contributed to the training and development of staff in the child-care social work teams and liaised closely with her colleagues to ensure that the quality of children's assessments was of an acceptable standard.

St Helens places an emphasis on professional development for all staff. The range of relevant training available to staff was impressive and the service should be commended for this, as it was directly linked to better outcomes for children in the adoption and child-care teams.

St Helens has a workload management system in place that had been used to evidence the need for additional resources in the team.

The adoption service had well -developed and developing reporting systems to ensure that the work of the agency was monitored by the senior managers of the service and by the elected members.

The service should establish, without delay, a robust system of file auditing: children's adoption files had evidence of management oversight, however there were inconsistencies in the content of children's files and their assessments and the quality of some of the paperwork was poor. Adopters' files were generally well ordered, with many files keeping a copy of contemporaneous notes from the assessment. However these files too, lacked management oversight. Decisions made during supervision should be recorded on all files and any signatures on documents should be dated and supplemented by the manager's or social workers full name. The service should develop and implement effective quality assurance systems for the supervision of children's and adopter's assessments.

Administrative staff were seen to be hardworking and sensitive to the nature of the work of the service. However, the agency should consider the adequacy of its provision and should urgently review the arrangements for adoption panel administration.

Staff personnel files were generally acceptable however the service should develop a system to ensure that written references are followed up with telephone enquiries and must ensure that administrative staff working in the adoption service are subject to CRB checks. Panel members' files do not meet the regulations either; CRB disclosures were present in most cases for new panel members, however the full range of information required was not present on established panel members.

The service must review the current arrangements for indexing and archiving adoption records in accordance with regulations and standards. The current arrangements are inadequate and they do not allow for adoption records to be stored securely and safely and retrieved efficiently.

Some adoption records are kept in the Adoption Permanency teams office base. The office premises are overcrowded and are not fit for purpose. St Helens are proposing to re-house the adoption team next year. It is

recommended that the managers and staff of the adoption service should be consulted throughout the design and allocation of office space for the service.

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	3
8	2
9	2

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
2	3
4	2
5	2
10	3
11	1
12	2
13	3
15	2
19	1
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	3
18	2

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

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	AD19	15 LAA 2003	The service must ensure that all staff and panel members' personnel files comply with schedules 3 & 4 of the regulation. This includes staff who work in the administrative team.	01/04/06
1	AD11	15 LAA 2003	As above.	01/04/06
1	AD28	15 LAA 2003	As above.	01/04/06
2	AD21	7 LAA 2003	The service must ensure the full implementation of the child placement strategy to improve service delivery in adoption.	01/12/06
3	AD27	Reg 14.4 AA Reg 1983	The service must store adoption records in a place of special security, and as far as is possible minimise the risk to the records from fire and water.	01/12/06

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	AD4	The service should ensure that some analysis is given by social workers to the weight that references should be given in prospective adopters assessments.
2	AD4	The service should ensure that preparation training addresses issues concerning the full range of diversity in adoption. Preparation training should be reviewed annually.
3	AD5	The service should develop tracking systems for children's permanence plans at an earlier stage in the care planning process.
4	AD5	The service should enhance the current support arrangements available to adopters to facilitate timely placements of children relinquished at birth.
5	AD12	The service should enhance and streamline the current arrangements for the effective production of adoption panel minutes and panel administration.
6	AD28	The service should develop a system to evidence that written references are followed up by telephone enquiries that are recorded on all personnel files.
6	AD19	As above.
6	AD15	As above.
7	AD18	The service should develop and implement a written protocol for the range of specialist advisers involved in the adoption service.
8	AD1	The children's guide should be altered to ensure that the name of the Commission for Social Care Inspection is communicated accurately.
9	AD16	The service is managed well within available resources however the need for increased dedicated management time for the adoption service is an important part of the services action plan, as is the full implementation of the child placement strategy.
10	AD25	The agency should establish and maintain a robust system for the auditing of files. Case notes should be

		typewritten, signed and dated. Any signatures should be supplemented by a full printed name. Any case decisions taken during supervision should be recorded on files.
11	AD26	The service should review access to adoption records to ensure that information can be collated and retrieved efficiently and effectively.
12	AD9	St Helens should develop a service wide strategy to supporting birth parents and their families. This strategy should build on some of the existing practice of the Adoption Support Worker and should ensure that current good practice is further developed and is shared with other partner agencies. Further to this the service should develop mechanisms to ensure that birth parents are involved throughout in the child's assessment.
12	AD8	As above.
13	AD29	The office premises are overcrowded and are not fit for purpose. The adoption service should be consulted throughout the design and allocation of office space for the service's new base.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

North West Regional Office

11th Floor

West Point

501 Chester Road

Old Trafford

M16 9HU

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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