



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

ADOPTION SERVICE

Harrow Council

**429-433 Pinner Road
North Harrow
Middlesex
HA1 4HN**

Lead Inspector
Jayne
Ivory

Announced
13th September 2005

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 Harrow Council Adoption Service

Address 429-433 Pinner Road, North Harrow, Middlesex,
HA1 4HN

Telephone number 0208 728 8818

Fax number

Email address

Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable) London Borough of Harrow

Name of registered manager (if applicable) Richard Marks

Type of registration LAA

No. of places registered (if applicable)

Category(ies) of registration, with number of places

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection

Brief Description of the Service:

Harrow Council's adoption service is part of the wider provision for children and families. The council offers the following adoption services: recruitment, preparation and assessment of adoptive parents; matching adoptive parents to children; approval of non-agency adopters; support and supervision of adopters; initial counselling for birth parents (in-house and independent); the assessment of children's needs; production of relevant reports for court and placement of children with adoptive families. The service commissions inter-country adoption assessments via joint arrangements with the West London and Westminster Adoption Consortium, however the responsibilities for ensuring the welfare of children from overseas placed with inter-country adopters remains the responsibility of the Adoption Team until the order is made. The council has a service level agreement with After Adoption to provide a full range of post approval and post adoption support.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection took place over a period of four days. During this time adopters, staff members and managers of the service were interviewed. Questionnaires were sent out to and received from; prospective and approved adopters, birth parents, social workers who had placed children with Harrow adopters and to specialist advisers for the agency. Further to this the Lead Inspector observed Harrow's Adoption and Permanence Panel and interviewed the Independent Panel Chairperson.

The inspection team would like to thank all the staff who spent a great deal of time and effort in organising and then facilitating the Inspection.

What the service does well:

Harrow's adoption service benefits from dedicated staff members who work hard to ensure that children are matched and adopters supported within existing limited staffing resources.

A number of Adopters who were interviewed or who returned questionnaires considered that they had received good preparation training and assessments from their individual social worker. Some of their comments were:

"We had a good experience of our home study, our social worker was reliable, sensitive and professional."

"They gave us a lot of information during the preparation training, we really liked listening to the adopter."

The service benefits from a thorough child focused Adoption and Permanence panel. The Independent Panel Chair brings knowledge and professional expertise to their role. Members of the panel asked good questions of staff and applicants attending for approval. The Adoption and Permanence Panel also invite adopters to the matching meeting. Harrow has supported the Adoption Panel to develop by enabling annual training events.

The Adoption and Permanence Panel is timely and supported by an excellent Panel Administrator.

Efforts are made to ensure that agency decisions are made within timescale, however more must be done to ensure that the Panel Administrator has enough allocated time to ensure that the regulations concerning the notification of the Panel's recommendation and subsequent agency decision are made within timescale.

The inspection found evidence that the specialist post of Life-story and Letterbox Coordinator within the Adoption Team was beginning to make a positive impact on the lives of some children, adopters and birth families. One adopter said "The family centre worker is completing my child's Life-story work, they are working hard with the birth family to ensure that my child gets this information before the adoption order is made. I know they will do a good job."

The senior management of Harrow's adoption service have evaluated the strengths and needs of the whole agency and demonstrated their knowledge of the services need to improve. They have developed a number of strategies to improve standards across the service, however not all of these had been fully implemented at the time of the inspection.

Social workers reported that the management team in Harrow were accessible and increasingly responsive. All social workers had access to regular professional case management supervision.

The inspection confirmed that Harrow ensures that a wide range of references and safeguards are taken up regarding the suitability of individuals to adopt. Harrow also benefits from robust recruitment and selection procedures that ensure that staff are suitable to work with vulnerable children and their families.

The Elected Member responsible for Children's Social Care in Harrow provides good support for the adoption service.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Not applicable. This was the first time that Harrow's adoption service has been assessed against the National Minimum Standards for Adoption and Local Authority Adoption Regulations 2003.

What they could do better:

The inspection of Harrow's Adoption Service found compelling evidence of a fragile service that was not able to meet the needs of all children who require adoption in a timely way. One member of staff described the care planning pathway for children with a plan for adoption as fractured.

One of the main blocks to service improvement was the lack of a stable workforce. Staff recruitment and retention was found to be problematic throughout and impacted upon the quality of service offered to children, prospective and approved adopters and birth families.

The service had developed a workforce strategy to address some of the medium to long -term issues concerning staff recruitment and retention, however this was not implemented at the time of the inspection.

The majority of Adopters considered that they had received a good service from their assessing social worker, however adopters told us:

"The information I have received has been clear and informative, but the process has been far too long, with unexplained gaps in between, where I felt I have been forgotten..."

"We feel as if we have to do all the chasing."

"There was a delay in getting our case allocated, once we had a social worker they were very professional, but they have now left the department."

"We have managed this process on our own, we don't think we should have but there just aren't enough social workers about in Harrow."

The Inspector requires details of a timetable for implementation of the workforce strategy as part of the services action plan.

The Inspector requires that the service must develop interim emergency measures to ensure that the pressure on the existing Adoption Service is alleviated to enable planning for children waiting, and the support of current prospective and approved adopters to be enhanced.

Harrow must develop clearer processes concerning the care planning for children.

The inspectors found evidence that not all staff were confident and clear about their role and responsibilities in the Permanence Planning Meeting.

The service should develop early warning systems to ensure that the needs of Harrow children who have been identified as needing an adoption placement inform Harrow's recruitment strategy.

Given some of the challenges of managing staff turnover in children's services Harrow should also ensure that all staff working with children and families have access to a sound induction into the legal framework and raft of guidance concerning working in partnership with children and their families. Harrow must ensure that all staff working with children in need of safeguarding have had access to relevant basic child protection and multi-agency training.

Harrow's current Induction Pack for social workers should be developed to ensure that it provides clearer and more user friendly information concerning safeguarding, care planning, including permanence, information concerning the National Adoption Standards and the practice implications of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

The Adoption Service would benefit from offering all staff involved in care planning for children training in the completion of children's assessments,

permanence, undertaking evidence based assessments, counselling for adults effected by adoption and inter-country adoption.

The Adoption Service should also consider ways in which it can strengthen the involvement of birth parents and birth families in planning for adoption.

Harrow's Adoption Service would benefit if the current administrative support was enhanced to allow for more dedicated time for panel administration. Whilst the current Panel Administrator is clearly very good at their job, their workload prevents the prompt distribution of agreed panel minutes until the following months panel. Written notifications concerning the outcome of panel and from the Agency Decision Maker were not evidenced on all files for adopters and children and their birth families.

The service should ensure that the arrangements for the quality assurance of work within the department are enhanced. The current interim arrangements for the Panel Adviser should be reviewed to allow for more internal gate keeping of work going to panel.

Harrow should consider the development of more specific services for the provision of post approval and post adoption support. The current Service Level Agreement with After Adoption is shortly to be reviewed and the inspector recommends that Harrow should consider the development of internal post-adoption support services with partners in health and education to ensure enhanced provision.

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 Standards

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 standard(s) 2,4,5,10,11,12,13,15 and 19

Harrow has an effective Adoption Panel, and a number of skilled and experienced staff in the Adoption Team, however the service must address inconsistencies in care planning practices and the assessment of children's needs in order to ensure that all children with a plan for adoption stay safe and secure and are placed with their adoptive families in timely way.

EVIDENCE:

Harrow had developed a recruitment strategy to recruit sufficient adopters to meet the needs of children waiting for adoption locally. The service had recognised that they needed to attract a broader range of adopters and had commissioned a recruitment and marketing agency with the aim of enhancing this part of their service. In the twelve months prior to the inspection Harrow had placed 9 children for adoption, with 14 children waiting for a placement. The recruitment strategy had only been recently developed so the full impact on the service could not be assessed at the time of the inspection.

Harrow must develop clearer processes concerning care planning for children. The inspectors found evidence that not all staff were confident and clear about their role and responsibilities in the Permanence Planning Meeting.

One social worker said that they had been given a form to fill in before the meeting and had received no guidance from their manager about how to fill it in.

The service needs to develop clearer policies, procedures and processes concerning permanence planning. Children's plans were not always seen to be well considered and implemented in a timely way.

The service should develop early warning systems to ensure that the needs of Harrow children who have been identified as requiring an adoption placement inform Harrow's recruitment strategy.

The inspection also found evidence that the wishes of children and their birth families were not always ascertained during the child's assessment. One child had complained that they had only seen their social worker twice in four months. Other assessments of the child's needs did include comments and wishes and feelings from birth parents.

There was substantial evidence that the wide variations in practice had been exacerbated by staff turnover in the children and families teams in the service. This is an area that will be addressed later in the report.

The information concerning children was not updated consistently. This meant that the matching process could be delayed and that adopters had gaps in their knowledge about the needs of the child. Harrow should develop the management oversight and internal quality assurance of children's assessments and matching reports to ensure staff follow policies and procedures that minimise unnecessary delay.

There was evidence that a number of plans for children requiring adoption had been delayed by the lack of clear policies and procedures concerning post-adoption support for children and their adoptive families. This is an area that should be addressed as part of the services action plan.

Harrow had recognised the need to develop clear written information for adopters covering the arrangements for referral to Adoption Register.

Prospective and approved adopters confirmed that they had access to good, informative preparation training that had helped them to understand the full range of issues surrounding adoption.

Many adopters confirmed that the home study had been completed with skill and sensitivity by the assessing social worker.

All adopters were found to have been subject to comprehensive checks and safeguards that were evidenced on file.

Social workers in the Adoption Team had accessed training in completing prospective adopter's assessments. The quality of the assessments varied with some workers being far more able to analyse information and identify the strengths and vulnerabilities of prospective adopters. Staff within the team had identified that they would benefit from additional training in completing competency-based assessments. This is an area that should be addressed as part of the services action plan.

Expectations regarding support and contact between prospective and approved adopters would benefit from being defined. A number of adopters felt as if they had to chase their social workers to get a response.

The adoption team must also ensure that adopters are given time to consider their assessment before it is submitted to panel. Harrow must develop a system to record whether prospective adopters waive their rights to consider their assessment for 28 days.

Harrow has an efficient and effective Adoption Panel, with clear policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice. This ensures that children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted by making decisions in a timely way and by ensuring that the care planning for children who have a plan for adoption is thoroughly scrutinised.

The Adoption Panel has clear Terms of Reference, which meet the National Minimum Standards. Adopters are given an opportunity to attend the panel and be heard. Harrow's Adoption Panel encourages adopters to attend the panel for matching.

The Adoption panel would benefit from developing induction for new panel members, which is completed within 10 weeks of becoming a panel member. The Adoption Panel is efficiently organised and conducted to avoid delays. Minutes of the panel are clear and record the reasons for any recommendations made.

Harrow must ensure that the arrangements for panel administration are enhanced to ensure that the full range of written notifications to adopters and birth parents by the Agency Decision Maker are made within timescale.

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 standard(s) 6 and 18

Harrow's Adoption Service cannot provide consistent levels of support for adoptive parents and must review resources and develop strategies to ensure adopters and their children are supported effectively.

EVIDENCE:

The service would benefit from developing a clear strategy for working with and supporting adopters. This could involve the development of a working agreement between Harrow and prospective adopters. The agreement should contain information concerning the arrangements for the assessment, target dates for panel and details of post approval support and training.

Harrow has a service level agreement with After Adoption to provide post approval and post adoption support. The Group Manager was in the process of reviewing the agreement at the time of the inspection to ensure that it was providing an accessible service to children, adopters and birth families. When the review is completed Harrow would benefit from ensuring that adopters have easier access to Harrow's own multi-agency and commissioned post-approval and post adoption support services.

A number of Adoption Agencies have worked with partners in health and education to ensure that children and adoptive families can access universal post-adoption services to support matching. This may be an area of development for the service.

Harrow does have arrangements in place to ensure that information, support and advice to prospective adopters who receive a proposed match with a child from overseas comes from the existing partnership with the West London and Westminster Consortium. This is supplemented by individual support from social workers in the Adoption Team who supervise any inter-country adoption placements.

Harrow had developed a specialist post of Life Story Co-ordinator and Letterbox Co-ordinator. The two posts had been combined when it proved difficult to recruit to the Letterbox Co-ordinator post.

The social worker providing this range of services to children, adoptive families and birth parents had approached their task with clear commitment. The inspection team found evidence that the hard work and creativity of the Life Story and Letterbox co-ordinator had ensured the development of a resource for other social workers and support workers across the service.

Harrow had provided investment in equipment for Life Story work, including computer soft wear, an extensive up to date library, digital camera and scanner. The individual worker involved should be commended for developing, training and disseminating their knowledge and skills.

Harrow has access to excellent medical and sound legal advise. The service is a member of British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) and subscribes to the Inter-Country Adoption Service helpline.

Harrow had identified the need to develop closer links with their partners in Health and Education to ensure more accessible support and advice was available to adopted children and their families.

The service had also acknowledged the need to develop a written protocol between Harrow and the range of specialist advisers involved in the adoption service.

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 standard(s) 7,8 and 9

The lack of a service wide strategy for working with birth families in Harrow was found to have excluded some children and families from the plan for adoption and from access to post adoption support.

EVIDENCE:

The inspection found very mixed practice concerning the involvement of birth families in their child's adoption. One social worker had worked hard to engage with birth parents concerning the plan for adoption. Other children's assessments and case files gave little evidence of the birth parents or birth families point of view.

One birth parent commented in their questionnaire that; "...the numerous social workers we had all lacked empathy."

The difficulties in staffing and the challenge of developing permanence planning in the service led to a lack of clarity and consistency in the assessment of children's needs. Harrow must ensure that all staff involved in working with children and birth parents have had training in completing children's assessments, including assessments for post adoption support and contact.

As has already been stated the inspection found evidence that the specialist post of Life-story and Letterbox Coordinator within the Adoption Team had made a positive impact on the lives of some children, adopters and birth families. One adopter said "The family centre worker is completing my child's Life-story work, they are working hard with the birth family to ensure that my child gets this information before the Adoption Order is made. I know they will do a good job."

Social workers reported that they had attended workshops in completing Life Story Work, and that they were increasingly aware of their responsibilities to ensure that this work was undertaken. A number of social workers and some

adopters said that Life Story work can be difficult to complete within the child's timescale.

The lack of administrative support available to the Letterbox Co-ordinator at the time of the inspection posed a serious threat to the continuing development of this service.

The inspection found that Harrow's Service Level Agreement with After Adoption ensured that some children and birth families could access specialist support. However the Service Level Agreement does not and should not compensate for the absence of a clear service wide strategy for working with and supporting birth parents and birth families both before and after adoption. This is an area that the service must address as a matter of some urgency.

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 standard(s) 1,3,14,16,17,20,21,22,23,25,26,27,28 and 29

The senior management of Harrow had already identified that the service was not meeting the needs of all children and adults touched by adoption to an acceptable standard. The service must ensure that their plans for improvement are fully implemented to improve the quality and range of services offered to children and their families.

EVIDENCE:

Harrow must look again at their draft Statement of Purpose to ensure that it accurately reflects the range of services offered. Further to this the service would benefit from refining the existing prioritisation policy and procedure to ensure that the needs of children waiting in Harrow inform the recruitment of adopters. This information could be used in the Statement of Purpose.

Harrow must also ensure that there are opportunities for all staff and stakeholders to be meaningfully consulted about the content of the final Statement of Purpose.

The inspector recommends that the Statement of Purpose should also be more specific about the levels and types of support available to children and adoptive parents.

The service has developed a Children's Guide to Adoption. The service may benefit from seeking out other examples of good practice concerning children's guides to adoption when the guide is next reviewed.

Adopters confirmed that they were provided with clear and comprehensive written information about the process of adoption from the agency.

There was evidence that the Adoption Team had been managed efficiently and effectively. However the secondment of the Team Manager to another key post in the organisation had left a gap during which the team said that they had managed themselves. February 2005 saw the appointment of a Group Manager in charge of provisions across Children's Services in Harrow.

There was clear evidence that the Group Manager had provided strategic and some operational management support to the service, however the Adoption Team were without a Team Manager for approximately 4 months. In July 2005 Harrow recruited an Interim Adoption Team Manager.

There was evidence from staff interviews and case files seen that the Interim Team Manager had started to make a positive impact on the service. The need to enhance management support to staff in the Adoption Team and to ensure adequate quality assurance of assessments, children's assessments and assessments for post adoption support is an area that must be addressed as part of the services action plan. The need to prioritise workloads is also pressing given that the team were carrying one vacancy at the time of the inspection and were bracing themselves for the departure of another colleague who was leaving the Adoption Team for another post in Harrow.

The Group Manager has a management qualification and a great deal of experience in providing and managing services for children and their families. The Interim Team Manager has also got a great deal of relevant practice experience and knowledge of adoption.

Harrow must ensure the full implementation of planned quality management processes in the High Performing Harrow Framework if service delivery is to be

improved in adoption. As part of Harrow's improvement plan senior managers had developed a workforce strategy to ensure that there are sufficient staff with the right experience and skills to meet the needs of children and adults in the adoption service.

The workforce strategy had been developed but not implemented at the time of the inspection. The need to implement the workforce strategy to make Harrow more competitive with neighbouring authorities must form part of the services action plan.

Staff interviews, case tracking with prospective and approved adopters and examination of children's and adopters' case files confirmed that recruitment and retention of staff is one of the biggest threats to service improvement in Harrow. Some adopters said that their social worker was not easily accessible; many reported that they thought that Harrow did not have enough social workers on the Adoption Team. The result of staff turnover and gaps in the management of the service resulted in a number of prospective and approved adopters feeling isolated and unsupported by the service at the time of the inspection.

Children's case files also provided evidence that staffing problems impacted negatively on children by causing delay in implementing agreed plans.

In addition to the implementation of the workforce strategy senior managers in the service should ensure that some form of workload relief is provided to staff within the Adoption Team to enable family finding for children waiting and approval and support of adopters who are unallocated to be prioritised.

Social workers had access to a range of training events, however social workers in the Children in Need Teams must have training in undertaking complex work, including care planning in adoption and refresher training in safeguarding children. Social workers in the Adoption Team should also have training in issues concerning Inter-Country Adoption and Birth Records Counselling before they undertake this work.

Senior managers of the service had developed the workforce strategy after consultation with staff. There were positive signs that staff considered that the strategic managers of the service were accessible and responsive. One social worker said, "we used to feel neglected, but our managers are interested in what we have to say now".

As part of the first stages of the implementation of the workforce strategy, managers were planning to conduct individual consultations with social workers and other staff members to get feedback about what Harrow does well and what they could do better.

The Adoption Team would benefit from developing existing systems to determine, prioritise and monitor workloads to ensure that staff time is being deployed in the most efficient, effective and equitable way.

In addition to this the Adoption Team should also develop existing structures and systems to ensure assessments and approvals of prospective adopters are implemented effectively.

Staff across the service reported that they had regular supervision (when they had a manager) and were all familiar with the services new system for professional development and appraisal.

The Adoption Team had dedicated administrative support staff which ensured that enquiries from prospective adopters were handled promptly, however the loss of the part time administrator of the Letterbox scheme should be addressed urgently to ensure that the current progress in auditing the scheme and setting up systems to manage the information exchange is not delayed or compromised.

The need for the working arrangements for the Panel Administrator to be reviewed to ensure more dedicated time for panel business should also form part of the services action plan.

Harrow has clear guidance on the contents of children's and adopters files and clear protocols for accessing information. Adopters files were well organised however the contents of children's adoption files should be reviewed to ensure that key documents are in place and that all the contents are appropriate. Storage arrangements were in the process of being transferred from the civic centre to another site in the agency. The Group Manager was aware of the agencies responsibility to ensure that adoption records are stored in a place of special security.

Working files were stored in a locked cabinet in a locked room. The senior administrator had access to the keys and ensured files were locked away securely at the end of every working day.

Separate records were kept for complaints on the corporate complaints database, however the inspector recommends that more should be done to encourage adopters to provide the agency with feedback. Harrow adopters could be asked for their views on the service they have received when the adoption order has been granted.

This is in addition to the panel feedback/evaluation form that adopters are already asked to complete.

Personnel files were found to be of a good standard. Harrow has good recruitment and selection procedures that are implemented in practice. The agency had ensured that panel members were subject to Criminal Records Bureau Checks (CRB) and had signed a confidentiality agreement.

However the agency must ensure that they develop a system to update CRB for all staff every three years, and must provide clearer evidence on personnel

files that written references have been followed up and validated by a telephone call.

Harrow's Adoption Team has access to identifiable office premises, which are well equipped.

There are appropriate systems in place to ensure the secure retention of records and files, including safeguarding of computerised information and good building security.

Harrow had identified the need to include a service specific disaster recovery plan for the Adoption Service in the corporate business recovery plan.

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	2
8	2
9	2

STAYING SAFE	
Standard No	Score
2	2
4	1
5	2
10	3
11	2
12	3
13	1
15	1
19	2
24	N/A

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

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
Standard No	Score
6	2
18	2

MANAGEMENT	
Standard No	Score
1	1
3	2
14	3
16	2
17	2
20	2
21	1
22	3
23	2
25	3
26	3
27	2
28	1
29	2
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.	2	7.1 a,b	The service must develop and implement effective processes concerning children with a plan for adoption to ensure that their welfare is promoted at all times.	30.3.06
2.	4	8.2 h AAR 1983 amended 2003	The service must ensure that they develop and implement a system to record if prospective adopters waive their rights to consider their assessment for 28 days before the Form F is submitted to panel.	30.3.06
3.	13	11 and 11a AAR 1983 amended 2003	The service must ensure that written notifications concerning the agency decision are made to birth parents and prospective and approved adopters in accordance with the regulations and standards.	30.3.06
4.				
5.	1	1	The service must ensure that the Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the work of the agency.	30.3.06
6.	21	10	Harrow must implement and keep under review their workforce strategy to ensure that there are sufficient suitably qualified staff with the right skills and experience to safeguard and	30.3.06

			promote the welfare of children who may be, or have been , placed for adoption by the authority.	
7.	2 and 6	10	The service must develop interim emergency measures to ensure that the pressure on the existing Adoption Service is alleviated and staffing resources increased to enable planning for children waiting, and the support of current prospective and approved adopters to be enhanced.	30.12.05
8.				

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.	2	The service should ensure that staff have access to clearer policies and procedures concerning permanence planning in the service.
2.	2	The service should develop and implement early warning systems to ensure that the needs of Harrow children who have been identified as requiring an adoption placement inform Harrow's recruitment strategy.
3.	4 and 3	The service should consider developing a working agreement between Harrow and prospective adopters to ensure that applicants are kept informed throughout the process.
4.	5	Adopters should be provided with clear written information about the Adoption Register.
5.	11	Harrow should ensure that they develop induction training for new panel members which is completed within 10 weeks of becoming a panel member.
6.	13	The service should review and enhance existing arrangements to ensure that the panel administrator has enough dedicated time to support the effective functioning of panel and to ensure that the agency decision is relayed in a timely way.
7.	15 and 19	The service should develop a system to evidence that

		written references are followed up by telephone enquiries and should develop a system to ensure that CRB checks are renewed every three years.
8.	6	The service should develop and implement a clear strategy for working with and supporting adopters.
9.	18	The service should develop a written protocol for specialist advisers.
10.	7, 8 and 9	The service should develop and then implement a strategy for working with birth parents.
11.	1	The service should consider reviewing the existing Children's Guide and seeking examples of best practice from other agencies.
12.	16,17 and 20	The service should ensure that the arrangements for the management and quality assurance of work within the adoption service are enhanced.
13.	23	The service should ensure that staff have access to a good quality training programme which involves a sound induction, and which allows them to keep up to date with professional and legal developments. Children and families staff would benefit from training in undertaking children's assessments, planning for permanence and updated safeguarding training. Staff working in the Adoption Team would benefit from access to training in Inter-Country Adoption, Birth Records Counselling and completing evidence based assessments.
14.	27	The service should audit the contents of the children's adoption files to ensure that they meet National Minimum Standards.
15.	29	The service should develop an adoption service specific disaster recovery plan.

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