Commission for Social Care Inspection

CSCI

Making Social Care Better for People

# inspection report

## Local Authority Adoption Services

**Warrington Borough Council Adoption Service**

Bewsey Old School

Bewsey

Warrington

WA5 5BF

2nd February 2004

## Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

**The role of CSCI is to:**

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

## Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

**The 4-point scale ranges from:**

4 - Standard Exceeded (Commendable)
3 - Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 - Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)
1 - Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)
'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.
'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.
'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

## ADOPTION SERVICE INFORMATION

**Name of Local Authority**
Warrington Borough Council Adoption Service

**Headquarters Address**
Bewsey Old School, Bewsey, Warrington, WA5 5BF

**Adoption Service Manager**

Mark Warr

**Address**
Bewsey Old School, Bewsey, Warrington, WA5 5BF

**Tel No:**
01925 444400

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

**Certificate number of this adoption service**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Date of last inspection** | **N/A** |
| **Date, if any, of last SSI themed inspection of adoption service** | **N/A** |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Date of Inspection Visit** | | 2nd February 2004 | **ID Code** |
| **Time of Inspection Visit** | | 10:00 am | |
| **Name of Inspector** | **1** | Jayne Ivory | 125225 |
| **Name of Inspector** | **2** | Maureen Moore | |
| **Name of Inspector** | **3** | | |
| **Name of Inspector** | **4** | | |
| **Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.** | | | |
| **Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)** | | | |
| **Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection** | | Mark Warr, Fran Smith | |

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## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Local authority adoption services are subject to inspection by NCSC, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption Act 1976 as amended, the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983 as amended and the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of Warrington Borough Council Adoption Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000.

The Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983 and the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the NCSC regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000.

The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

## INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The inspection methods used in the production of this report are set out in Part B. Pre-inspection information, and the manager's written self-evaluation of the service, have also been taken into account. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

A full range of adoption services are offered by the Warrington Borough Council Adoption Team.
A Group leader and the Team Manager, who also have line management responsibility for the Fostering Service, support the team.
The Principal Officer for Looked After Children, who was directly responsible to the Assistant Director for Children and Families, had overall management responsibility for the team. The Principal Officer had just taken up the position of the chairperson of the combined Fostering and Adoption Panel at the time of this inspection. The adoption team had developed two specialist posts, including the appointment of specialist recruitment and development officer and a panel administrator.
Warrington Borough Council Adoption Service aims to deliver a comprehensive adoption service and to secure permanent adoption families for children who live within the Borough and for whom adoption has been identified as the plan. The service aims to recruit sufficient adopters who live within and outside the local authority to meet the diverse needs of all children requiring adoptive families.
Warrington Adoption Service provides an adoption service that supports and meets the needs of:

- Children requiring adoptive families
- Adults seeking to adopt children
- Parents wishing to relinquish children for adoption
- Adults who were adopted who want to access their records or trace their birth families
- Birth parents whose children were adopted

At the time of this inspection Warrington were providing the following adoption services:

- Assessment, preparation, approval and training of adults applying to adopt children looked after by the council

- Making information available about children requiring adoptive families and adults who have been approved to adopt to the National Adoption Register and Mersey Region Adoption Consortium.

- Providing information and counselling to birth parents relinquishing their children for adoption
- Matching and placing children looked after by the council, where it has been decided that adoption is the best plan for the Child
- Providing an independent social work service to non-relinquishing birth parents, siblings and relatives
- Providing counselling and information to adults who live within the local authority who wish to gain access to their birth records or trace their birth families
- Providing counselling and information to birth parents who wish to trace their own children who have been adopted
- Reporting to court as directed on the application of adults wishing to adopt their stepchildren
- The right for adopted children and their families to an assessment for post adoption support
- The assessment and management of post adoption support services
- Warrington also aims to involve children and adopters fully in the design and delivery of the adoption service

# PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

## INSPECTOR'S SUMMARY

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

This was the first time that Warrington Borough Council's Adoption Service had been inspected against Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003 and National Minimum Standards. The inspection confirmed that Warrington offers an essentially good service to children, within existing resources. The authority also offers a reasonably good service to prospective adopters and adopters, but has the potential to improve if additional resources were made available. At the time of the inspection the service had already developed a number of specialist posts and was considering the best way to plan for and resource the Adoption Service for the changes in legislation concerning post-adoption support.

**Statement of Purpose 1**
**One standard was assessed.**
The statement of purpose meets the requirements. Warrington has used the BAAF guide to adoption as their initial children's guide. Further work needs to take place to ensure that the children's guide meets the National Minimum Standards.

**Securing and Promoting Children's Welfare 2**
**One standard was assessed.**
There is a written plan for the implementation and evaluation of recruitment strategies. There is a strong and positive relationship between the adoption and childcare social work teams, which is reflected in the practice found during the inspection.

**Prospective and Approved Adopters**
**Standard 3-6**
**All four standards were assessed as part of this inspection.**
The adoption service states that it welcomes potential applicants without prejudice. The inspection found that the service could develop their information for adopters to reflect the range of work that the team offers. The inspection found that more links needed to be made with ethnic minority communities in the Warrington area to ensure placements for children waiting.

Adopters and prospective adopters confirmed that there was a formal, thorough and comprehensive assessment procedure. Some prospective adopters considered that they had not benefited from the joint preparation training with foster carers that the service had provided. Warrington has reviewed their preparation training in light of the National Minimum Standards. The Inspection Team would support the development of separate introduction and preparation evenings for prospective foster carers and adopters.

Several adopters expressed their satisfaction with the service; one commented that the whole adoption process had been very quick. Some adopters expressed concern about a lack of information at matching. This is an area of practice that the service was already reviewing at the time of the inspection.

**Birth Parents and Birth Families**
**Standards 7-9**
**All three standards were assessed as part of this inspection.**
No birth parents were interviewed as part of this inspection, although a number completed and returned their questionnaires. Birth parents confirmed that they were treated fairly by the service and that they were consulted and involved in making plans for their child. The service has an agreement with After Adoption to provide independent support and advice for birth parents. Warrington provided evidence throughout the inspection of a consistently high standard of social work practice in supporting birth parents. The service should be commended for this good practice. The service had recognised the need to develop a clear strategy for working with birth parents and birth families. This strategy should capture the existing good practice and develop it as part of the services action plan.

The inspection identified that a number of children were without their life story books, several months or years after placement. This is an area that should be addressed in the services action plan.

**Adoption Panels and Agency Decisions**
**Standards 10-13**
**All four standards were assessed as part of this inspection.**
The panel is properly constituted and comprises relevantly qualified and experienced people. However some panel members are coming to the end of their tenure and the service must ensure that replacements are sought and supported to become panel members in line with Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 1983 and 2003, and National Minimum Standards. The panel has access to excellent medical and outstanding legal advice. The chairperson of the panel was new into post, and panel had not had the opportunity to develop their practice concerning prospective adopters attending panel meetings.
This is something that should form part of the services action plan.

**Fitness to Provide or Manage an Adoption Agency**
**Standards 14-15**
**Both standards were assessed as part of this inspection.**
All managers were appropriately skilled and experienced. The manager is studying for a certificate with the Institute in Leadership and Management. The service should demonstrate how the manager will be supported to gain this qualification to meet National Minimum Standards by April 2005.

**Provision and Management of the Adoption Agency**
**Standards 16-18**
**All three standards were assessed as part of this inspection.**
There was evidence during the inspection that the service was over-stretched at a managerial level. There were clear roles and responsibilities within the service. The lines of accountability within the adoption service were clear but the spans of responsibility were so wide for the service manager and the team manager had so many staff to supervise that issues of case management and quality assurance within the adoption service were found to be compromised. The need for more designated management time and managerial

oversight of the service is an area that should be addressed as part of the services action plan.
Warrington had the benefit of an excellent performance management team and performance management culture. There were performance management systems and staff available to ensure that care planning and the assessment and approval of prospective adopters were recorded and monitored against the timescales set out in the National Adoption Standards. The service should develop a report to the Executive of the council about the effectiveness of the adoption service every six months.

**Employment and Management of Staff**
**Standards 19-24**
**Five standards were assessed as part of this inspection.**
The service has clear recruitment and selection procedures for the employment of staff, however procedures should be amended to ensure that telephone enquiries are made to verify written references. This will form part of the services action plan.
Staff interviewed as part of the inspection expressed some anxiety about the threat that the lack of competitive Terms and Conditions and Salaries within Warrington made to the recruitment and retention of staff. Senior managers were aware of the issue and were developing strategies in response to local competition. The service should address the issue of sufficient staff for the service as part of the action plan.

Most staff confirmed that they had access to professional training and supervision. The service had an excellent Induction of new staff based on TOPSS's standards. The service should ensure that all staff receive professional supervision and Personal Development Plans in line with National Minimum Standards. This includes sessional workers employed by the service.

**Records**
**Standard 25-28**
**All four standards were assessed as part of this inspection.**
Warrington has policy and procedural instructions concerning the creation and maintenance of case records for children and prospective and approved adopters, which meet National Minimum Standards, however the service should develop a system, which records the decisions made by managers on the case file.
The adoption service provides relevant information to other adoption agencies at the earliest, appropriate opportunity.
Warrington has a clear and well-understood system for authorising the access to adoption case records and their indexes and for authorising disclosure of adoption information in line with Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003 and National Minimum Standards.
There is a written policy on case recording, a copy of which was supplied to the inspectors.
No one outside of the adoption service can gain official access to any records relating to children and prospective adopters unless the team manager gives permission.
All forms F that leave the adoption service are clearly marked indicating that they are confidential documents. Separate records are kept for staff, complaints and allegations.
Complaints were managed efficiently and effectively by the service.
The inspection found evidence of poor case recording on some of the files chosen as part of the case-tracking sample. This will have to be addressed as part of the services action plan.
The inspection of Staff Files confirmed that there were comprehensive files with most of the necessary checks and references completed.
Personnel files at the time of the inspection did not have a record of written references being

followed up by telephone enquiries. This is something that the service should develop and address.
Examination of Panel member's files confirmed that confidentiality agreements were in place, however some panel members were going through the process of Criminal Records Bureau, or if they worked for Warrington their Criminal Records Bureau checks were held by other departments. Panel member's files must be brought in line with National Minimum Standards and Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003 as part of the services Action Plan.

**Fitness of Premises**
**Standard 29**
**This standard was assessed as part of this inspection.**

There are identifiable office premises to which staff and others with a legitimate interest have access during normal office hours.
There are efficient and robust administrative systems, including IT and communication systems.
The service has adequate and well -organised provision for the secure storage of adoption records, which are safe from fire and flood.
The premises and its contents are adequately insured. However the service should develop a disaster recovery plan, which will include both provision of premises and safeguarding/backup of records.

## Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

| | |
|---|---|
| Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's adoption service satisfies the regulatory requirements: | NO |
| Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their adoption service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice: | YES |
| Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of a failure by a Local Authority adoption service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial: | NO |
| Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority adoption service: | NO |

**The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:**

See main body of report.

**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection**
**(Not relevant at first NCSC inspection)**

| Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned? | NA |
|---|---|

**If No please list below**

**STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983 and the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003.

| No. | Regulation | Standard | Required actions | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

**Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.**

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate officer of the Local Authority is requested to provide the Commission with an action plan, which indicates how requirements and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan is shown in Part D of this report.

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption Act 1976, the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983, the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 or the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services. The Authority is required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for adoption services.

| No. | Regulation | Standard * | Requirement | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 7.1 (a), (b) | LA20 | The manager must manage the adoption service with sufficient care, competence and skill. | 17.9.04 |
| 2 | 10 (a), (b) | LA21 | Warrington Borough Council must ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working for the adoption service. This requirement is also cross-referenced to standard 16 and 20 relating to the threat to the service from the lack of management time. | 17.9.04 |
| 3 | 11.2, 3 (d) | LA11LA28 | Panel members must not be allowed to begin work unless all relevant Criminal Records Bureau and status checks (where required) have been completed and the outcomes are recorded on panel members files. This requirement relates to both Standard 11 and 28. | 17.9.04 |
| | | | | |

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION**

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

| No. | Refer to Standard * | Recommendation Action |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | LA1 | The service should develop a children's guides for younger children and children with a disability. |
| 2 | LA3 | The service should develop the preparation and training for overseas adopters. |
| 3 | LA4 | The service should offer separate information giving evening and preparation training for adopters as part of the preparation and assessment process. |
| 4 | LA5 | The service should develop policy and practice around matching to ensure that adopters are provided with accurate and up to date information about the child and the placing social worker is given up to date, comprehensive information about the approved adopters. |
| 5 | LA5 | The service should develop a system which records whether the adoptive parents agree to notify the adoption agency if the child dies during childhood or soon afterwards. |
| 6 | LA5 | The service should also develop clearer information for adopters, pre and post- approval about the role of the Adoption Register for England and Wales. |
| 7 | LA6 | The service should develop clearer information about support available to adoptive parents. |
| 8 | LA6 | The service given to families who wish to adopt a child from overseas should be reviewed and enhanced. |
| 9 | LA6 | The services policy and practice around the disruption of an adoptive placement should be developed in line with National Minimum Standards. |
| 10 | LA8 | The service should ensure that children are provided with their life story books in a timely manner. |
| 11 | LA9 | The service should develop a computerised database for the post adoption letterbox scheme. |
| 12 | LA9 | The service should develop a clear strategy for working with and supporting birth parents and birth families both before and after adoption. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 13 | LA10 | The service should ensure that the draft adoption panel policies and procedures are authorised. |
| 14 | LA10 | The service should provide prospective adopters with an opportunity to attend the adoption panel and be heard. |
| 15 | LA11 | The service should ensure that panel members receive training in the basic principles of the law and eligibility criteria for overseas adoption. |
| 16 | LA13 | The standard letter, which confirmed the agency decision, should be amended to clarify that the panel recommends and the agency decision maker decides. |
| 17 | LA14 | The service should demonstrate how the manager will be supported to gain a qualification equivalent to NVQ 4 by April 2005. |
| 18 | LA17 | The service should provide a written report to the Cabinet to satisfy themselves that the adoption agency is effective and achieves good outcomes for children. This report should be presented every six months. |
| 19 | LA18 | The service should develop a written protocol for specialist advisors, who should be suitably qualified and where applicable registered by the appropriate professional body. |
| 20 | LA19 | The service should develop a system to ensure that written references are checked with telephone enquiries. Outcomes of the telephone conversation should be recorded. |
| 21 | LA19 | The service should ensure that all staff undertaking birth records counselling under section 51 of the Adoption Act 1976 are trained in this type of counselling. |
| 21 | LA19 | The service should ensure that all staff receive professional supervision and Personal Development Plans in line with National Minimum Standards. This includes sessional workers employed by the service. |
| 22 | LA20 | The service should consider how to configure the teams to ensure that staff are managed and monitored to provide the best possible service. |
| 23 | LA20 | The managers of the service should develop systems that evidence how caseloads are monitored and managed to deliver an efficient and effective service. |
| 24 | LA21 | Warrington should address the issue of sufficient staff for the service, given the threat that local competition may have to effective staff recruitment and retention. |
| 25 | LA23 | The service should ensure that all staff, including sessional workers are offered training and opportunities for development. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 26 | LA25 | The service should develop a system, which records the decisions made by managers on the case file. The records of decisions made either in supervision or as a result of a quality assurance check or staff consultation should be kept on the case file and should be legible, clearly expressed, signed and dated. |
| 27 | LA27 | The service should ensure that the system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records is implemented and that remedial action is taken if a case record fails to meet the services required standard. |
| 28 | LA29 | The service should develop a disaster recovery plan, which includes both the provision of premises and safeguarding/back-up of records. |

- Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g. LA10 refers to Standard 10.

## PART B INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

| | |
|---|---|
| Placing authority survey | YES |
| Placing social worker survey | YES |
| Prospective adopter survey | YES |
| Approved adopter survey | YES |
| Birth parent / birth family member survey | YES |
| Checks with other organisations and Individuals | |
| • Directors of Social services | YES |
| • Specialist advisor (s) | YES |
| Tracking Individual welfare arrangements | YES |
| • Interview with children | YES |
| • Interview with adopters and prospective adopters | YES |
| • Interview with birth parents | NO |
| • Interview with birth family members | NO |
| • Contact with supervising social workers | YES |
| • Examination of files | YES |
| Individual interview with manager | YES |
| Information from provider | YES |
| Individual interviews with key staff | YES |
| Group discussion with staff | YES |
| Interview with panel chair | YES |
| Observation of adoption panel | YES |
| Inspection of policy/practice documents | YES |
| Inspection of records (personnel, adopter, child, complaints, allegations) | YES |

| | |
|---|---|
| Date of Inspection | 4/02/04 |
| Time of Inspection | 0930 |
| Duration Of Inspection (hrs) | 116 |
| Number of Inspector days | 9 |
| Additional Inspection Questions: | |
| Certificate of Registration was displayed at time of inspection | NA |
| The certificate of registration accurately reflected the situation in the service at the time of inspection | NA |

| | |
|---|---|
| Total Number of staff employed (excluding managers) | 21 |

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

| | |
|---|---|
| 4 - Standard Exceeded | (Commendable) |
| 3 - Standard Met | (No Shortfalls) |
| 2 - Standard Almost Met | (Minor Shortfalls) |
| 1 - Standard Not Met | (Major Shortfalls) |

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.
"9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable on this occasion.
“X” is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

## Statement of Purpose

**The intended outcome for the following standard is:**

- **There is clear written statement of the aims and objectives of the adoption agency and the adoption agency ensures that it meets those aims and objectives.**

**Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.2, 1.3 (partial) and 1.4 – 1.7)**
**There is a clear written statement of the aims and objectives of the adoption agency which describes accurately what facilities and services they provide.**

| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |
|---|---|---|

Warrington Adoption Service had developed a good Statement of Purpose, which could be further developed to reflect the service that the authority could provide to adopters with the inclusion of information about quality standards, support and timescales.
The council had ratified the Statement of Purpose.
A number of adopters said that they were not aware of the services Statement of Purpose. The service may benefit from giving the Statement of Purpose to prospective adopters as soon as they embark on the formal preparation and assessment process.
Warrington had purchased the BAAF children's guide, the service manager considered that the agency should develop children's guides for younger children and children with a disability. This will form part of the services action plan. The service manager advised the inspector that any development of the children's guide might be done in partnership with neighbouring local authorities.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Has the Statement of Purpose been reviewed annually?**<br>**(Record N/A if the information is not available)** | YES |
| **Has the Statement been formally approved by the executive side of the council?** | YES |
| **Is there a children's guide to adoption?** | YES |
| **Does the children's guide contain all of the information required by Standard 1.4?** | NO |

## Securing and promoting children's welfare

**The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:**

- **The needs and wishes, welfare and safety of the child are at the centre of the adoption process.**

**Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.3)**
**The adoption agency has written plans for the implementation and evaluation of effective strategies to recruit sufficient adopters to meet the needs of the range of children waiting for adoption locally.**

| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 3 |
|---|---|---|

The service has a recruitment strategy, which is reviewed annually, that sets out the aims of the service to recruit sufficient adopters to meet the needs of the range of children waiting for adoption locally.
The inspection found evidence from case tracking and interviews with staff and service users that children were matched with adopters who best met their identified needs. This included families, which reflected the child's own ethnic, cultural and religious background and families who were able to take groups of brothers and sisters.
The service makes every effort to avoid delay.
In matching children with approved adopters the service takes into account the views and feelings of the child based on their age and understanding.
The service had a strategy of placing their children locally wherever possible, and was able to be a net contributor of adopters to the Merseyside Consortium, of which it is a member.

**In the last 12 months:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **How many children were identified as needing adoptive families?** | 8 | |
| **How many children were matched with adopters?** | 21 | |
| **How many children were placed with the service's own adopters?** | 14 | |
| **How many children were placed with other services' adopters?** | 7 | |
| **How many children were referred to the Adoption Register?** | 2 | |
| **In the last 12 months, how many children were matched with families which reflected their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language?** | 21 | |
| **What percentage of children matched with the adoption service's adopters does this represent?** | 100 | % |
| **How many sibling groups were matched in the last 12 months?** | 4 | |
| **How many allegations of abuse or neglect were made about adopters approved by this adoption service?** | 0 | |
| **On the date this form was completed, how many children were waiting for a match to be identified?** | 2 | |

## Prospective and approved adopters

**The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:**

- **The adoption agency recruits and supports sufficient adopters from diverse backgrounds, who can offer children a stable and permanent home to achieve a successful and lasting placement.**

**Standard 3. (3.1 – 3.3 and 3.5 - 3.6)**
**Plans for recruitment will specify that people who are interested in becoming adoptive parents will be welcomed without prejudice, will be given clear written information about the preparation, assessment and approval procedure and that they will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.**

| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| The service takes a local, regional and national approach to recruiting prospective adopters, which maintains that potential applicants will be welcomed without prejudice. All information seen as part of the inspection reflects this stance and discussion with approved adoptive parents confirmed this to be the case. Monitoring systems ensured priorities were highlighted.<br>Requests for a service from prospective adopters wishing to adopt a child from overseas are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.<br>The service recognises that the preparation and training for overseas adopters needs to be developed. | | |

**Standard 4. (4.1 – 4.9)**
**Prospective adopters are involved in a formal, thorough and comprehensive assessment, preparation and approval process.**

| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| The Inspection confirmed that adopters were involved in a formal, thorough and comprehensive assessment and approval process. Adopters spoke positively about being able to meet with other adopters.<br>Some adopters expressed concern about the joint preparation training and information giving evenings that the service put on for prospective adoptive parents and foster carers.<br>The service was in the process of reviewing preparation training in light of this feedback and had planned to offer separate preparation training for adopters and foster carers in the immediate future. The Inspector supports this approach and considers that the service should offer separate information giving evening and preparation training for adopters as part of the preparation and assessment process. | | |

| Standard 5 (5.1 – 5.4)<br>**Approved adopters are given clear written information about the matching, introduction and placement process, as well as any support to facilitate this they may need. This will include the role of the Adoption Register for England and Wales.** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |
| The service has developed policies and procedures, which provide approved adopters with information about the matching, introduction and placement process. The existing procedure involves a planning meeting that is chaired by a representative from the Child Protection and Looked After Child Reviewing Team.<br>The inspection found evidence that although written notes of the meeting are provided to all attending the meeting, that information concerning the matching process is not as comprehensive as it should be.<br>The service should develop policy and practice around matching to ensure that adopters are provided with accurate and up to date information about the child and the placing social worker is given up to date, comprehensive information about the approved adopters.<br>The service should develop a system which records whether the adoptive parents agree to notify the adoption agency if the child dies during childhood or soon afterwards. The service should explain the importance of having this information to the birth family, and develop a system to pass on this information to the birth parents, if they wish to have it.<br>The inspection saw evidence of adopters preparing clear and appropriate information about themselves and their home, under the guidance of the adoption social workers.<br>The service should also develop clearer information for adopters, pre and post- approval about the role of the Adoption Register for England and Wales. | | |
| **Does the local authority have written procedures for the use of the Adoption Register?** | YES | |

| Standard 6 (6.1 – 6.7)<br>Adoptive parents are helped and supported to provide stable and permanent homes for the children placed with them. | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key findings and evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |

There was evidence from case tracking that adoptive parents are generally well supported to provide stable and permanent homes for children.
Some adopters spoke with delight at the support they had received from the service. Other adoptive parents were less positive and clear about what level of support they could expect from the service. Other adopters were confused about why requests for information about the children placed for adoption with them were not followed through in an efficient and effective manner.
The inspection found evidence of a service which does strive to support adopters, but which may be enhanced if adopters and workers were clearer about levels of support at the planning stages of the placement and at the matching. This could be achieved by the development of quality standards concerning support, which could be clearly stated and agreed between social workers with adopters before the placement is made, and then reviewed.
The service employs an experienced, specialist worker to complete assessments of prospective adopters who wish to adopt a child from overseas. The applicant's assessment once completed and approved is then allocated to a worker within the team. Given the number of applicants wanting to adopt a child from overseas in Warrington the inspector has some concerns about the need for the service to allocate more team resources, including access to training and development for this specialist work. The team had recognised that the service given to families who wish to adopt a child from overseas should be enhanced.
Adoptive parents confirmed that they had been advised about the importance of keeping safe any information provided by birth families for the child. Some adopters expressed concern about getting completed life story books for the child. The delay in life story book work had been recognised as a problem in the service.
The service had also recognised that although disruption rates in the service were generally very low, with no disruptions in the last 12 months that Warrington's policy and practice around the disruption of an adoptive placement needed to be further developed to meet National Minimum Standards.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Number of adopter applications started in the last 12 months** | 18 | |
| **Number of adopters approved in the last 12 months** | 14 | |
| **Number of children matched with the local authority's adopters in the last 12 months** | 14 | |
| **Number of adopters approved but not matched** | 5 | |
| **Number of adopters referred to the Adoption Register** | 1 | |
| **How many placements disrupted, between placement and adoption, in the last 12 months?** | 0 | |

## Birth Parents and Birth Families

**The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:**

- **Birth parents are entitled to services that recognise the lifelong implications of adoption. They will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.**

**Standard 7 (7.1 – 7.5)**
**The service to birth parents recognises the lifelong implications of adoption.**

| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 4 |
|---|---|---|

Warrington Adoption Service recognises the lifelong implications of adoption and seeks to support Birth Parents in making effective plans for their children. All staff members interviewed were extremely sensitive to the needs of birth parents and birth families. The Inspectors found evidence that the service has excellent working practices for providing support to birth parents.
Senior managers and frontline staff were all committed to providing ongoing support to birth parents and families. The out of hours team could offer an immediate response to birth parents and the inspectors found evidence of developing partnerships with other key agencies in the area.
Birth parents' views about the adoption and contact were clearly recorded on file, care plans in court reports and reviews.
Warrington commissions After Adoption to provide independent social work services for birth parents. The service manager ensures that the service level agreement is reviewed regularly and that information on the use of independent support is available as part of that review.

**Standard 8 (8,1 – 8.2)**
**Birth parents and birth families are enabled to contribute to the maintenance of their child's heritage.**

| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 2 |
|---|---|---|

Through out the inspection there was evidence that Birth Parents were encouraged to contribute to the maintenance of their child's heritage. The reading of files and case tracking interviews confirmed that the service ensured that information for children from their birth parents and families was preserved and maintained.
Childcare social workers confirmed that despite the difficulties for birth parents in working with social services that some effective work could be undertaken at the conclusion of legal proceedings. Letters on file and comments from birth parents confirmed this.
The case tracking confirmed that some children had not been given their life story books and other significant information, although they were a number of months or even years into their placement. The service should have sufficient resources to ensure that children are provided with their life story books in a timely manner.

| Standard 9 (9.1)<br>**The adoption agency has a clear strategy for working with and supporting birth parents and birth families (including siblings) both before and after adoption. This includes providing information about local and national support groups and services and helping birth parents to fulfil agreed plans for contact.** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |
| Warrington Adoption Service provided evidence of some excellent practice concerning work with birth parents. The adoption support workers within the Family Placement Team support Birth Parents to participate in post adoption contact through the letterbox system.<br>The letterbox scheme database is maintained in a file. The scheme may benefit from being computerised, and the service should give some thought to how this could be facilitated.<br>The service, as has already been mentioned, commissioned After Adoption to provide independent support and social work advice to birth families.<br>The service had recognised that in they needed to develop a service strategy for working with and supporting birth parents and birth families. The strategy should capture the excellent social work practice that exists within the department and develop it with other local service providers to meet and exceed National Minimum Standards. The strategy should form part of the services action plan. | | |

## Adoption Panels and Agency decisions

**The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:**

- **Each adoption agency has an adoption panel which is organised efficiently and is effective in making quality and appropriate recommendations about children suitable for adoption, the suitability of prospective adopters and the matching of children and approved adopters.**
- **The adoption agency's decisions are made to promote and safeguard the welfare of children.**

**Standard 10 (10.1 – 10.3)**
**Adoption panels have clear written policies and procedures about the handling of their functions and ensure that they are implemented.**

| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 2 |
|---|---|---|

Warrington has draft adoption policy and procedures, which meet National Minimum Standards. The service must ensure that the draft policies and procedures are authorised and signed off and that training is provided about the content to panel members.
The service should also provide training and develop panels practice concerning the attendance of prospective adopters at panel, and give an indication when the first prospective adopters will be given the opportunity to attend a panel meeting. The panel chairperson and panel may wish to consider and review the appropriateness of the venue of the panel, which was observed as part of the inspection. The size of the table and room may make prospective adopters feel somewhat crowded.

| Standard 11 (11.1 – 11.4)<br>**The adoption agency shall ensure that each adoption panel is properly constituted, that panel members have suitable qualities and experience to be a panel member and have regular training to allow them to keep up to date with changes in legislation, guidance and practice. Where the adoption agency is involved in inter-country adoption, each member of the panel understands the implications of being adopted from overseas and seeks advice, when necessary, on the laws and eligibility criteria for the overseas country.** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 1 |
| The panel is properly constituted and comprises relevantly qualified and experienced people. However some panel members are coming to the end of their tenure and the service must ensure that replacements are sought and supported to become panel members in line with Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 1983 and 2003, and National Minimum Standards.<br>There was evidence from some panel members files that their Criminal Records Bureau check was either being processed or in one case was held by a different department within the same authority. The service must ensure that evidence of a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure check and the outcome is kept on panel members files in accordance with the Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003.<br>The panel has access to excellent medical and legal advice.<br>The chairperson of the panel was new into post, and the panel had not had the opportunity to develop their practice concerning prospective adopters attending panel meetings. This is something that should form part of the services action plan.<br>In addition to this the service should ensure that panel members receive training in the basic principles of the law and eligibility criteria for overseas adoption. | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Is the panel a joint panel with other local authorities?** | NO |
| **Does the adoption panel membership meet all of the statutory requirements?** | NO |

| Standard 12 (12.1 – 12.3)<br>**Adoption panels are efficiently organised and conducted and are convened regularly to avoid delays in the consideration of prospective adopters and matching children and adopters.** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 3 |
| Warrington Fostering and Adoption panel meets monthly and considers the avoidance of unnecessary delay for children as a high priority. Panel members receive the papers one week prior to the panel date to prepare for panel business. Extra panels could and had been arranged to avoid unnecessary delay for a child.<br>The effectiveness of panel was borne out during the inspection. From the observation of the panel it was clear that each panel member had carefully considered all papers. Discussion was seen to be extremely child-focused.<br>Minutes of the panels meetings were accurate and informative and clearly stated the panel's discussion, reasons for conclusions reached and all recommendations made. | | |

| **Standard 13 (13.1 – 13.3)**<br>**The adoption agency's decision is made without delay after taking into account the recommendation of the adoption panel and promotes and safeguards the welfare of the child.** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |
| The Assistant Director of Children's Services acted as the agency decision maker and attended the adoption panel as an observer. The agency decision maker should clarify their role and responsibilities as part of the decision making process when prospective adopters start to attend panel.<br>The agency decision was made without delay, however the standard letter, which confirmed the agency decision, should be amended to clarify that the panel recommends and the agency decision maker decides. | | |

## Fitness to provide or manage an adoption agency

**The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:**

- **The adoption agency is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.**

**Standard 14 (14.1 – 14.3 and 14.5 – 14.6)**
**The people involved in carrying on and managing the adoption agency:**

- **possess the necessary knowledge and experience of child care and adoption law and practice and**
- **have management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and**
- **ensure that it is run on a sound financial basis and in a professional manner.**

| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| All managers were appropriately skilled and experienced. The adoption team manager is studying for a certificate with the Institute in Leadership and Management. The service should demonstrate how the manager will be supported to gain this qualification to meet National Minimum Standards by April 2005. | | |
| **Does the manager have Management NVQ4 or equivalent?** | NO | |
| **Does the manager have at least 2 years experience of working in a childcare setting in last 5 years?** | YES | |

**Standard 15 (15.1 – 15.4)**
**Any person carrying on or managing the adoption agency are suitable people to run a voluntary organisation or business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.**

| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Examination of staff files confirmed that the person managing the service was suitable to conduct a service concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The manager had experience of child care and fostering and adoption social work practice over many years. The manager had also had responsibility for managing a child protection caseload.<br>The service must ensure however that all written references for staff are followed up by a telephone reference, the outcome of which is then recorded on a personnel file. This recommendation is cross-referenced to standard 19. | | |

## Provision and management of the adoption agency

**The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:**

- **The adoption agency is organised and managed efficiently, delivering a good quality service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.**

**Standard 16 (16.1 – 16.7)**
**The adoption agency is managed effectively and efficiently.**

| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 1 |
|---|---|---|

There was evidence during the inspection that the service was over-stretched at a managerial level. There were clear roles and responsibilities within the service. The lines of accountability within the adoption service were clear but the spans of responsibility were so wide for the service manager and the team manager had so many staff to supervise that issues of case management and quality assurance within the adoption service were found to be compromised. The need for more designated management time and managerial oversight of the service is an area that should be addressed as part of the services action plan.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Number of complaints received by the adoption service in the last 12 months** | 2 |
| **Number of the above complaints which were substantiated** | 0 |

| Standard 17 (17.1 – 17.3)<br>There are clear written procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the adoption agency and ensuring quality performance. | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |
| Warrington had the benefit of an excellent performance management team and performance management culture. There were performance management systems and staff available to ensure that care planning for children and the assessment and approval of prospective adopters were recorded and monitored against the timescales set out in the National Adoption Standards. Monthly reports on the team's activity were provided for the Principal Officer and the Team Manager.<br>The Assistant Director provided an annual report to the Executive and the designated Councillor for Social Services maintained regular oversight of the services activity and overall performance.<br>The Inspectors would recommend that the service should provide a written report to the Cabinet to satisfy themselves that the adoption agency is effective and achieves good outcomes for children. This report should be presented every six months. | | |
| **How frequently does the executive side of the council receive written reports on the work of the adoption service?** | | |
| **Monthly?** | | |
| **Quarterly?** | | |
| **Less than Quarterly?** | YES | |

| Standard 18 (18.1 – 18.5)<br>The adoption agency has access to specialist advisers and services appropriate to its needs. | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |
| Warrington adoption service has access to a range of specialist advisers. The medical advisor attends panel and is also available to give advise to staff or prospective adopters. The service has access to an excellent legal advisor who is extremely knowledgeable about adoption issues. Childcare social workers confirmed that they benefited greatly from the services the legal team offered. Warrington have developed a court mentoring role, which childcare staff confirmed had and continued to be very helpful when preparing cases for court.<br>The service also has access to a therapeutic team for looked after children. This service was well used and integrated within the adoption and fostering service to support children placed for adoption or for preparing children to move onto adoption.<br>The service should develop a written protocol for specialist advisors, who should be suitably qualified and where applicable registered by the appropriate professional body. | | |

## Employment and management of staff

**The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:**

- **The people who work in the adoption agency are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children waiting to be adopted or who have been adopted. The number of staff and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the adoption agency.**

**Standard 19 (19.1 – 19.14)**
**Anyone working in or for the adoption agency are suitable to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.**

| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 2 |
|---|---|---|

The service has clear recruitment and selection procedures for the employment of staff, however procedures should be amended to ensure that telephone enquiries are made to verify written references.
Most staff confirmed that they had access to professional training and supervision.
The service has a commitment to ensuring that staff have access to training, but as part of the Action Plan Warrington will have to ensure that all staff undertaking birth records counselling under section 51 of the Adoption Act 1976 are trained in this type of counselling.
The service had an excellent Induction of new staff based on TOPSS's standards. The service should ensure that all staff receive professional supervision and Personal Development Plans in line with National Minimum Standards. This includes sessional workers employed by the service.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Do all of the adoption service's social workers have DipSW or equivalent?** | YES | |
| **What % of the adoption service's social workers have a PQ award?** | 50 | % |

| Standard 20 (20.1 – 20.12)<br>Staff are organised and managed in a way which delivers an efficient and effective service. | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |

Warrington Adoption Service had already recognised that staff were not organised and managed in a way, which delivered the best service.

The expansion of the team to include a panel administrator, a group leader, a recruitment, training and development officer and community support workers had brought real benefits to the service which were evidenced throughout the inspection. However the development of new posts meant that the Fostering and Adoption Team had grown in size to 21 members of staff who were supervised by the Team Manager and Group Leader.

The numbers of staff and the pressures of developing services to meet National Minimum Standards and Regulations in Fostering and Adoption had in the opinion of the inspector impacted on the quality of case management in the service.

Although the issues identified in case tracking had not impacted negatively on outcomes for children in a global sense, there was evidence from a number of sources that the service in general, and the management of the service in particular was under pressure. If the pressure on management time is not addressed then there was evidence that this would impact negatively on the service as a whole.
The service may have some systems in place to determine, prioritise and monitor workloads for frontline staff, but the inspector recommends that the managers of the service should develop systems that evidence how caseloads are monitored and managed to deliver an efficient and effective service.
The service should consider how to configure the teams to ensure that staff are managed and monitored to provide the best possible service as part of the action plan.
The service should also keep under review the adequacy of administrative support for the adoption service given the recent expansion in social work staff.
There was evidence of good administrative systems to ensure that enquiries from prospective adopters were dealt with in an efficient and effective manner.

As has already been discussed in standard 18 the service has access to a wide range of specialist advisers and services for children and young people and their prospective/approved adopters.

| Standard 21 (21.1 – 21.4)<br>There is an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff to meet the needs of the adoption agency and they are appropriately supported and assisted in providing a service. | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |
| Staff interviewed as part of the inspection expressed their commitment to working for Warrington but had some anxiety about the threat that the lack of competitive Terms and Conditions and Salaries within Warrington made to the recruitment and retention of staff. Senior managers were aware of the issue and were developing strategies in response to local competition. The service should address the issue of sufficient staff for the service as part of the action plan.<br>The inspection, as has already been mentioned found evidence of a lack of management time within the service. The issue of creating more management time within the service is something that the inspector has already identified as being one of the adoption services most pressing recommendations.<br>This recommendation is cross-referenced to Standard 16.<br>The service has the capacity to use sessional or agency workers to manage workload pressures in the short term but the issue of how the team is best organised was still under consideration at the time of the inspection. The service had also drafted in additional support from a community support worker to complete outstanding life story book work.<br>Staff policies encouraged the retention of salaried staff; these included flexible working conditions and access to training and support. | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Total number of social work staff of the adoption service** | 21 | **Number of staff who have left the adoption service in the past 12 months** | 2 |
| **Number of social work posts vacant In the adoption service.** | 1 | | |

| Standard 22 (22.1 and 22.3)<br>The adoption agency is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff. | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 3 |
| Staff confirmed that Warrington adoption service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff. The service has a well-developed and disseminated whistleblowing policy which is known to all staff and which meets National Minimum Standards.<br><br>As has already been mentioned staff expressed goodwill towards their service and managers during the inspection, but were concerned about the lack of competitive salaries and terms and conditions in Warrington, and the impact this may have on staff recruitment and retention. | | |

| Standard 23 (23.1 – 23.6)<br>There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments. | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |
| There is a good quality training programme available to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up to date with professional and legal developments. The service has an excellent Induction Training linked to TOPSS Induction Standards, which meets National Minimum Standards.<br>The service benefited from the existing developmental contract with staff, which ensured that completed training and identified training needs could be clearly linked to service delivery outcomes.<br>For example all staff had recently completed the BAAF assessment competency training to ensure consistency in assessment practice across the team. The recently appointed Panel Administrator had also been supported to attend the next BAAF panel Administrators Course.<br>The service must ensure that all staff, including sessional workers are offered training and opportunities for development in line with National Minimum Standards.<br>The team meets regularly and frequently. There are weekly team briefings, monthly team meetings and service briefings to keep staff up to date and informed about practice and policy developments. | | |

## Records

**The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:**

- **All appropriate records are maintained securely, kept and are accessible when required.**

| Standard 25 (25.1 – 25.5)<br>The adoption agency ensures comprehensive and accurate case records are maintained for each child, prospective and approved adopter with whom the agency has worked. | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |
| Warrington has policy and procedural instructions concerning the creation and maintenance of case records for children and prospective and approved adopters, which meet National Minimum Standards.<br>Records are kept of status checks, health and Criminal Records Bureau checks on file for all adults' aged 18 and over living in a prospective adopters household.<br>The system is congruent with the Looked After Child system.<br>The inspector observed that many files had recording, which had been signed and dated by the team manager. The service should develop a system, which records the decisions made by managers on the case file. The records of decisions made either in supervision or as a result of a quality assurance check or staff consultation should be kept on the case file and should be legible, clearly expressed, signed and dated. | | |

| Standard 26 (26.1 – 26.2)<br>**The adoption agency provides all relevant information from its case files, in a timely way, to other adoption agencies and local authorities with whom it is working to effect the placement of a child.** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 3 |
| The adoption service provides relevant information to other adoption agencies at the earliest, appropriate opportunity.<br>Warrington has a clear and well-understood system for authorising the access to adoption case records and their indexes and for authorising disclosure of adoption information in line with Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003 and National Minimum Standards. | | |

| Standard 27 (27.1 – 27.6)<br>**There is a written policy on case recording which establishes the purpose, format, confidentiality and contents of files, including secure storage and access to case files in line with regulations.** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 2 |
| There is a written policy on case recording, a copy of which was supplied to the inspectors. No one outside of the adoption service can gain official access to any records relating to children and prospective adopters unless the team manager gives permission. All forms F that leave the adoption service are clearly marked indicating that they are confidential documents. Separate records are kept for staff, complaints and allegations.<br>Complaints were managed efficiently and effectively by the service.<br>The inspection found evidence of poor case recording on some of the files chosen as part of the case-tracking sample. These case files had been initialled and dated by the manager, with no comments made about improving the quality or adequacy of the record and may be indicative of a lack of management time. This is a matter, which should be addressed in the services action plan. | | |

| Standard 28 (28.1 – 28.2)<br>**Up-to-date, comprehensive personnel files are maintained for each member of staff and member of the adoption panel.** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Findings and Evidence** | **Standard met?** | 1 |
| The inspection of Staff Files confirmed that there were comprehensive files with most of the necessary checks and references completed.<br>Personnel files at the time of the inspection did not have a record of written references being followed up by telephone enquiries. This is something that the service should develop and address and is referred to within standard 19 of this report.<br>In addition to this the inspector's found evidence that personnel files contained common e mail's relating to confidential information about an individual within a group of staff. The human resources department must ensure that they do not contravene any relevant legislation with this practice. | | |

Examination of Panel member's files confirmed that confidentiality agreements were in place, however some panel members were going through the process of Criminal Records Bureau, or if they worked for Warrington their Criminal Records Bureau checks were held by other departments. Panel member's files must be brought in line with National Minimum Standards and Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003 as part of the services Action Plan. This should include: a record of the Criminal Records Bureau disclosure number, evidence of any qualifications, records of any training undertaken, and any experience of working in a child care setting.

## Fitness of Premises

**The intended outcome for the following standard is:**

- **The premises used by the adoption agency are suitable for the purpose.**

**Standard 29 (29.1 – 29.5)**
**Premises used by the adoption agency are appropriate for the purpose.**

| Key Findings and Evidence | Standard met? | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| There are identifiable office premises to which staff and others with a legitimate interest have access during normal office hours.<br>There are efficient and robust administrative systems, including IT and communication systems.<br>The service has adequate and well -organised provision for the secure storage of adoption records, which are safe from fire and flood.<br>The premises and its contents are adequately insured. However the service should develop a disaster recovery plan, which will include both provision of premises and safeguarding/back-up of records. | | |

| PART C | LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY<br>**(where applicable)** |
|---|---|
| | |

**Lay Assessor** _____ **Signature** _____

**Date** _____

## PART D PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

**D.1 Local authority manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.**

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 2nd February 2004 of inspection of Warrington Borough Council Adoption Service any factual inaccuracies:

| Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible |
| --- |
| DETAILS ARE AVAILABLE ON FILE AT THE CSCI NORTH WEST REGIONAL OFFICE |

**Action taken by the NCSC in response to the provider's comments:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Amendments to the report were necessary | NO |
| Comments were received from the provider | YES |
| Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report | NO |
| Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate | YES |

**Note:**
In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the local authority adoption manager, both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

**D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 21st July 2004, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.**

**Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Action plan was required | YES |
| Action plan was received at the point of publication | YES |
| Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion | YES |
| Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion | NO |
| Provider has declined to provide an action plan | NO |
| Other: <enter details here> | NO |

**Public reports**
It should be noted that all NCSC inspection reports are public documents.

## D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

**Local authority manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies**.

**D.3.1 I Mark Warr of Warrington Borough Council Adoption Service confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.**

**Print Name** _____

**Signature** _____

**Designation** _____

**Date** _____

**Or**

**D.3.2 I of Warrington Borough Council Adoption Service am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:**

| |
|---|
| |

**Print Name** _____

**Signature** _____

**Designation** _____

**Date** _____

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.