



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

ADOPTION SERVICE

Staffordshire County Council Adoption Service

**St Chad`s Place
Stafford
ST16 2LR**

Lead Inspector
Vivien Slyfield

Announced Inspection
8th-11th January 2007 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Adoption*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Staffordshire County Council Adoption Service
Address	St Chad`s Place Stafford ST16 2LR
Telephone number	01785 223121
Fax number	01785 277004
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Staffordshire County Council, Social Care and Health Directorate
Name of Nominated manager (if applicable)	Marian Richards
Type of registration	Local Auth Adoption Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration: N/A

**Date of last inspection
November 2003**

Brief Description of the Service:

The Adoption Service is placed within Staffordshire's Children and Lifelong Learning Directorate and provides a service for all children in the county in need of an adoptive family. A team based at Madford House in Stafford provides the initial referral, preparation training and ongoing training of prospective adopters. The assessing, supporting and family finding social workers are a county-wide team with social workers based in teams at Lichfield, Uttoxeter and Adoption Options at Burton-on-Trent, which is where the adoption team manager is based. The service recruits, trains, assesses and supports prospective adopters and finds placements for children living in the county. Inter-country adopters are assessed by the team and provided with support, including agency subscription to the Inter-Country Adoption Centre Helpline. Independent support is offered to birth families via a service level agreement with After Adoption. The adoption workers also provide birth records counselling.

SUMMARY

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

This is the second inspection by the Commission of Staffordshire County Council's Adoption Service. Before the inspection fieldwork took place, supporting documentary evidence was received and read by the lead inspector. Questionnaires were received from 2 prospective and approved adopters, 9 placing social workers, 1 birth family member, 1 placing authority and 2 specialist advisers.

Two inspectors spent 4 days with the service. Senior and front line staff from the Adoption Service were interviewed, as were a group of children's social workers, a group of Independent Reviewing Officers and the Agency Decision Maker. Four adopters were interviewed and two birth parents. Personnel files, adopter's and children's files were read during the course of the inspection. The panel was observed and the panel chair interviewed.

The inspectors appreciated the time taken to arrange the inspection especially at a time of change for the authority facing re-organisation.

What the service does well:

The preparation groups for prospective adopters were seen to be providing clear and useful information. Comments were received from adopters, placing social workers and questionnaires, which indicated that the courses were effective and well run. One questionnaire stated,

"the prep classes were vital and really gave us considerable food for thought and have helped us with our child, giving us a different perspective and other considerations."

There was evidence from staff and adopters of effective and sensitive preparation work with children. One adopter commented that their child's adoption was " handled extremely well. We were impressed with how smoothly the settling-in process was."

There were examples of well organised and presented Life-Story Books, which were seen as part of the process of preparation.

The Matrix matching forms and Matrix Meetings are effective in drawing workers and information together to make the best possible placements for children.

The work of Sustain was referred to by staff and adopters in providing support and guidance in working with children

Decisions made by supervisors were clearly and consistently recorded on the files seen

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection the Post Box exchange has been provided with administrative support. This was a recommendation following the last inspection and is seen by staff to have enhanced the service.

The support offered to birth families has improved. The Permanency social workers have developed this area of work and there was evidence of effective working relationships with birth families and of their involvement in plans for children. While this work was seen as effective it does not provide the level of independence necessary. The service level agreement with After Adoption is viewed by staff to have worked well and is currently under review.

The standard of preparation work with children, including life-story work was of good quality. There was a strong commitment and understanding from the staff involved and recognition of the vital importance of this activity.

Since the last inspection the Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide have both been reviewed and with some minor amendments and ratification by the council will be compliant with the regulations.

The process of matching children and adopters has improved. A Matching Matrix has been established, which is used in Matching Meetings to establish appropriate and effective placements.

The provision of information for adopters has improved with clearer information about the children needing adoptive families.

The organisation of Adoption Panel has reduced the number of changes to the agenda. There was no evidence during this inspection of matters repeatedly being moved on to a later Panel meeting.

The records kept on Panel Members are now compliant with Regulations and were well ordered.

Personal Development Profiles are now established for all staff and used in identifying training and personal development needs.

All confidential information is now stored in lockable rooms.

What they could do better:

While there is recognition that newly appointed staff have appropriate CRB checks in place there must be a system that ensures renewal checks are undertaken before the expiry of the current check.

There was evidence on files seen and in Panel papers and minutes of delays in planning for children. In a number of situations there was no evidence of any activity between Looked After Children Reviews and therefore of drift taking place in moving children towards permanency.

Although there is some good quality work with birth families and evidence of effective working relationships there is a need to establish a source of independent support at an earlier stage and the ensure that information about counselling and support groups is consistently provided.

The level of staffing for the Service needs to be reviewed. The additional hours worked by staff and the need to stop the practice of second opinion visits is a cause for concern and it is hope this can be considered as part of the planning for the re-organisation.

Letters of notification of the agency's decision about adoption plans for children must be sent to parents and evidence of this recorded on the child's Adoption File. This file needs to comply with The Adoption Agency Regulations 2005, Regs 12,15 and 16 and Schedule I.

Where adoption plans for sibling groups are discussed it is vital that each child is given full consideration. The current system of joint consideration of sibling groups in Panel meetings and in the sharing of information across Child Placement Reports makes this unclear. The joint minute of Panel's discussion makes it difficult to store the information in a way that respects confidentiality.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

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

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

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

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing - There are no NMS that map to this outcome

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements identified during the inspection

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- The agency matches children with adopters (NMS 2)
- The agency assesses and prepares adopters (NMS 4)
- Adopters are given information about matching (NMS 5)
- The functions of the adoption panel are as specified (NMS 10)
- The constitution and membership of adoption panels are as specified (NMS 11)
- Adoption panels are timely (NMS 12)
- Adoption agency decision is made without delay and appropriately (NMS 13)
- The manager is suitable to carry on or manage an adoption agency (NMS 15)
- Staff are suitable to work with children (NMS 19)
- The agency has a robust complaints procedure (NMS 24 Voluntary Adoption Agency only)
- The agency safeguards and promotes the welfare of its service users (NMS 32)

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

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

2,3,4,5,10,11,12,13,15,19,24 and 32.

Quality in this outcome area is adequate.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The systems in place for the preparation, assessment and approval of adopters and matching promote safe placements for children. The agency needs to address the renewal of Criminal Records Bureau checks for existing staff.

EVIDENCE:

The Adoption Service recruits well for the children needing adoptive families. In the last year 85% of children were placed within six months of the decision that adoption was their plan. The children are well matched with adopters who

can meet their varying needs. The views and wishes of children were well reflected in the documentation seen.

The groups run to prepare prospective adopters were seen as effective. They run approximately three or four times a year, but if there is a need for an additional course they will run one. Currently the service is considering extending the preparation to four days, which would seem an appropriate move. Adopters were positive about the course and found it helpful in their consideration of adoption. The course was described as "very informative", "it made us think differently about certain scenarios, especially about sexual abuse." Another adopter said,

"We thought the course was thought provoking and thought it would be make or break for applicants."

Inter-country adopters attend the course run by Inter-Country Adoption Centre. This is seen as effective and helpful.

The assessments of prospective adopters have improved in quality. However, there is a need for more detailed exploration of difficult issues and greater use of analysis and more explicit use of competencies and identification of strengths and areas in need of development. Consideration should be given to extension of the references taken to include all previous partners. The Health and Safety checklist should include guns and weapons, although the initial visit form does ask about guns it would be beneficial to incorporate these explicitly in the Health and Safety check. A questionnaire received from a placing social worker commented the assessments needed "a little more on the capacity to parent would be beneficial."

Adopters understood the need for a thorough assessment process and felt it was made manageable by the approach of the assessing social workers. One comment was it "has been a really pleasurable process. Our social worker has been really brilliant – very professional and very supportive."

The process of second opinion visits had been established in the team, but recently stopped due to reduced staffing levels. It is hoped that this will be re-established and that care is taken to ensure there is no conflict of interest for the worker undertaking this task. There were a number of examples of the family finding worker undertaking the second opinion visit when an initial link had already been made with the prospective adopters.

There was a marked improvement on the matching process for the Service. The Matching Matrix provides an effective tool in identifying and recording needs. The Matrix Meeting was seen as helpful in drawing information together and in making appropriate matches. The evidence from the low number of disruptions indicates effective matching with adopters. The team gave a clear

indication of the priority given to supporting placements. When worker commented that when a child is "placed, it's very much a team effort."

Life story work is well established in the permanency teams. This work is seen as essential in helping children understand their situation and in preparing them for adoption. There were examples of good quality Life Story Books and an understanding that this was a part of a much wider process. Life Appreciation Days were in place and viewed as effective by staff. Concern was expressed by staff involved in the life story work that the reorganisation soon to take place may reduce the time available for work of this nature and so limit the way children are prepared for adoption. It is hope that the standard of life story work is maintained within the new structure for staff.

The Adoption Panel meets monthly, with additional Panels arranged as necessary. Workers no longer reported last minute changes to the agenda. The administrative process works effectively, with clear and informative minutes. It would assist the minutes if there was a clear distinction between panel members and those in attendance. There is a need for separate record of the discussion for each sibling. The consideration of the needs of each sibling individually needs to be established within the Panel process. The Panel may find it helpful to provide a system for feedback for all those attending to allow consideration of how Panel is perceived, which could be used in the appraisal of members and in general Panel development. Prospective adopters are invited to attend the Panel, but it is accepted if they choose not to do so. Some comments were received from approved adopters that they felt the way in which they were informed of the Panel's recommendation could be improved, "given more significance" and another that more time was needed in conveying the information.

The decision making process appears to work smoothly and effectively. All the information seen during the inspection indicated that decisions are made within the appropriate timescales. The only area of concern was that managers described a situation where the local authority had been put under pressure by the Court when a judge stated that he would not grant a Care Order with adoption as the plan. Senior managers were involved in discussion and the decision was changed without re-referral to the Adoption Panel. This does not follow the process prescribed in the regulations. It is appreciated that there has been liaison with the judiciary following this incident.

The nominated manager is suitably skilled, qualified and experienced and in general the staff in the Adoption Service were in the same position. There was unfortunately one exception where the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check had expired. The renewal system for CRB checks must ensure that all staff have a current check in place while working for the Service.

The policies and procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse need to include specific reference to children placed for adoption. This can be added to Part 10 of the current procedures in addition to those on foster carers.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- The adoption agency provides support for adoptive parents (NMS 6)
- The agency has access to specialist advisers as appropriate (NMS 18)
- Services are tailored to meet the needs of people affected by adoption (NMS 33)

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

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

6,18 and 33.

Quality in this outcome area is good.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. There is a range of support available to adoptive families, which promotes the maintenance of secure placements and there is a commitment to further development of the support available.

EVIDENCE:

There is a clear system in place to support adoptive families in their care of children. Information from adopters and the questionnaires received from them indicated that they were aware of the support available and able to use it. An Adoption Support Panel has been developed to consider support packages and also to discuss and explore adoption support issues. The outcome of this panel is used to inform Adoption Support Plans.

There are service level agreements with After Adoption and Sustain. There is a designated post for adoption work within Sustain. Adopted children and their families are able to access therapeutic work, consultation and training from Sustain. There can be a rapid response (within a week) to referral if needed. Comments were received from adopters about the value placed on the work of Sustain. There were examples of consultation as part of the provision of information during matching. One adopter commented, "Sustain were very helpful and have made it much easier to talk about a difficult family history."

Similarly support from After Adoption was viewed positively. Both these agreements are about to be reviewed by the Adoption Service.

There is a need to keep the level of adoption support staffing under review as the service develops and the need is likely to increase.

Specialist advice is available from the legal service, an experienced medical adviser and a clinical psychologist in CAMHS. All these were used effectively by staff and were accessible to adopters when appropriate.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Birth parents and birth families are involved in adoption plans (NMS 7)
- Birth parents and birth families are involved in maintaining the child's heritage (NMS 8)
- The Adoption agency supports birth parents and families (NMS 9)
- Service users receive good quality services based on their needs (NMS 34)

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

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

7,8,9,and 34

Quality in this outcome area is good.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. There is a commitment to support birth parents and this enhances their ability to make a positive contribution towards their child's heritage and so give good and accurate information to children about their history.

EVIDENCE:

The Permanency Workers have made a significant contribution to the work undertaken with birth families and the ability to capture and hold vital information for adopted children. There was generally evidence of birth families involvement in plans for children. This needs to be extended to all situations, even where there are complex difficulties. Nearly all the Child Placement Reports seen had information from birth parents. There was evidence of effective working relationships between birth parents and the Permanency Workers. One birth family member stated that they had good information from the worker and were able to pass on early photographs and gifts. Their comment was "I can't fault them." A birth mother had a strong supportive relationship with the Permanency Worker, "she is a rock."

There was also evidence from other birth families that some did not feel they had been offered counselling nor did they feel they had information about support groups.

There is an established system of indirect exchange between birth families and adopted children. The Post Box was set-up in 1996 and was run initially with only social work involvement . Since moving to Adoption Options in Burton-on-Trent in 2004 it has been provided with administrative support, which has enhanced the service. There are currently 441 children involved in the Post Box exchange.

The use of life story work, Life Story Books and Memory Boxes all provide effective tools in involving birth families and in maintaining children's heritage. There was a clear understanding and professional empathy from the workers which gave depth and sincerity to this work. A questionnaire from a placing social worker commented on the "high standard", of preparation work

"especially the expertise of the permanency workers in the preparation of children and knowledge base e.g. Theraplay and strategies to positively enhance attachment."

Adopters were supported and encouraged to meet with birth families where appropriate. Although anxious one adopter commented that meeting the birth mother had made a significant difference in the way they will be able to talk to their child about her.

Management

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- There is a clear written statement of the aims and objectives of the adoption agency and the adoption agency ensures that it meets those aims and objectives (NMS 1)
- The agency provides clear written information for prospective adopters (NMS 3)
- The manager has skills to carry on or manage the adoption agency (NMS 14)
- The adoption agency is managed effectively and efficiently (NMS 16)
- The agency is monitored and controlled as specified (NMS 17)
- The staff are organised and managed effectively (NMS 20)
- The agency has sufficient staff with the right skills / experience (NMS 21)
- The agency is a fair and competent employer (NMS 22)
- The agency provides training for staff (NMS 23)
- Case records for children and prospective / approved adopters are comprehensive and accurate (NMS 25)
- The agency provides access to records as appropriate (NMS 26)
- The agency's administrative records processes are appropriate (NMS 27)
- The agency maintains personnel files for members of staff and members of adoption panels (NMS 28)
- The premises used by the adoption agency are suitable for purpose (NMS 29)
- The adoption agency is financially viable (NMS 30, Voluntary Adoption Agency only)
- The adoption agency has robust financial processes (NMS 31)

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

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

1,3,14,16,17,20,21,22,23,25,26,27,28,29 and 31

Quality in this outcome area is good.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The agency is well managed at all levels and this ensures that a safe and effective service is provided to adopters and children.

EVIDENCE:

The Statement of Purpose has been reviewed and needs some amendments with explanation of terms used, a clearer description of the approval process and of the structure before being finalised. It is due to be amended and ratified in April this year. The Children's Guide has improved and is now more usable for children and provides some useful information. It does need an additional "box" about checking the child is happy in placement. One of the placing social workers commented it was "Very good and child focused. This will help a young child to understand adoption." Some further development is needed to provide Guides for children of different ages and abilities.

The recruitment of adopters is well managed and prospective adopters are provided with clear, useful information. The information about the children needing placement was particular clear and well focused. Some additional information is needed on, when the Service may or may not take up the application, a current Statement of Purpose and the fee for inter-country adoption.

The Service is well managed with clear and effective communication between managers and social workers. Staff at all levels felt that there was good communication and that issues are highlighted and addressed. The Assistant Team Manager in the Recruitment Team has a particular focus on Adoption and has established that workers in this team undertake some assessment and birth counselling work to inform their role as the initial point of contact and as trainers in the preparation groups. A questionnaire from a placing social worker stated, "Good communication and working relationships help to provide an excellent service."

Staff were seen to be organised effectively and efficiently. The fact that workers are based at different locations does not appear to have a detrimental effect on the efficient running of the service. The issues that arose related to different forms being used and issues about cascading training. There is a strong sense of team identity and the team felt well supported by the manager and their colleagues. There was regular, useful supervision. The administrative staff were well integrated into the team. They saw themselves as a "small team, but very supportive" and that they "always look after each other."

The social workers have been working below their established numbers, as due to the reorganisation staff have who have left have not yet been replaced. This has led to staff working well over their hours to try to maintain the same level of service. An example was given of one member of staff being owed nearly 70 hours.

Comments were received from placing social workers and adopters about the level of skill and expertise in the adoption team. An adopter described them as "very helpful and informative". Questionnaires from placing social workers stated, "staff are very experienced practitioners in the area of adoption and placing children for adoption." They are "Experienced staff, who are committed and have a wide knowledge of adoption and the needs of all those involved in the process." This is illustrative of effective and close working relationships between the adoption, permanency and child care teams.

It was a difficult time for the inspection to take place as it had been recently preceded by a job evaluation and the plans for re-organisation. Managers were aware of the difficulties and stresses this created for staff. The changes in the structure have a particular impact on an experienced and skilled team, as the number of senior practitioners is due to be reduced. Staff expressed concern about the impact of this on career progression and that they felt "devalued" by the reduction in senior practitioners. Anxiety was expressed by all the staff seen that the changes needed to ensure that the high standard of direct work with children in preparation for adoption should not be lost.

There were some mixed views about the availability of good quality training. Placing social workers felt that they had effective and useful training. They felt they had been well prepared for the Adoption and Children Act and cited the Theraplay training as "brilliant." Within the adoption team only one worker had completed the post qualifying award. One of the adoption team had undertaken the DfES training on the Adoption and Children Act and had cascaded this to four of the team. There was recognition that there had been a workshop available on the Act but some staff had not been able to attend this due to lack of notice. Adoption Team staff were aware of in-house training in safeguarding but none had been able to attend. While they felt that their manager was good at passing on information they felt they had little opportunity to attend external training that was relevant to their specialist role.

Although there has been only one report on the Service to the council executive the responsible councillors were well informed and there was sound corporate governance, with effective use of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The case records for prospective and approved adopters were in good order and information stored in them was accessible. There was evidence on files of supervisor's decisions and monitoring of the file. It was also reported that the panel advisor monitors changes identified for reports through the Panel system. The information held about children although well organised did not comply with Regulations 12,15 and 16 of the Adoption and Children Act 2005. These files lacked notification letters to birth parents of the agency's decisions about adoption, not all had fully completed Child Placement Reports or panel minutes. The recording on children's files was disadvantaged by the practice of joint consideration of siblings. This has been referred to earlier in relation to the Panel process and would assist recording being related to a specific child both in reports and minutes if the information was separated to relate just to

one child. This would also ensure that the needs of each individual child are clearly and comprehensively addressed.

Complaints were reported to be collated and overviewed by the nominated manager. The Personnel records were improved and compliant apart from the CRB issue referred to under "Staying Safe".

The fieldwork time did not allow for visits to the premises used by adoption staff in Lichfield and Uttoxeter. It was reported that all files are stored in locked cabinets and locked rooms. The archive arrangements were not inspected as they were reported to be unchanged since the last inspection. The premises at Burton-on-Trent are about to be changed as it was reported that the lease has expired and been extended to March. Alternative accommodation has been identified and staff were positive about the change but uncertain when it will take place. It is understood that the delay in confirmation of these arrangements is due to the re-organisation.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Adoption have been met and uses the following scale.

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
No NMS are mapped to this outcome	

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	2
8	3
9	3
34	3

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

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
No NMS are mapped to this outcome	

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
6	3
18	3
33	3

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection? **YES**
 Requirement 4.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Voluntary Adoption and the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2003 or Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.	AD19	AA Regs 2003, 11 Schedule 3	All staff working for the service must have a current Criminal Records Bureau check in place.	28/02/07
2.	AD2	AA Regs 2003	The systems in place for care planning for children must ensure there is no drift or delay and that children are identified as soon as possible when permanency outside the birth family becomes necessary.	28/02/07
3	AD13	AA Regs 2003	Once the agency has decided that adoption is the plan of a child the plan should not be altered without re-referral to the Adoption Panel in line with regulations.	28/02/07
4.	AD32	AA Regs 2003	The Child Protection Procedures must include specific reference to situations where a child is placed for adoption.	05/04/07
5	AD25	AA Regs 2005	Adoption files for children must comply with Regs 12,15 and 16. Reports on children who are part of a sibling group must focus on the individual child.	05/04/07

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	AD25	An audit of children's Adoption Files should be undertaken to ensure full and accurate information is recorded.
2	AD4	Assessments of prospective adopters should address the competencies and strengths they have or will need to develop.
3	AD4	Consideration should be given to seeking references from all previous partners.
4	AD4	Guns and weapons should be included in the Health and Safety Checklist to check licences and safe storage.
5	AD4	Second opinion visits should be re-established with workers who do not have a conflict of interest in the approval of the couple.
6	AD10	The Panel should consider the needs of each sibling individually. Panel should consider the development of a system that provides them with direct feedback from those attending.
7	AD7	The inclusion of birth parents views and information about them should be consistent in all Child Placement Reports.
8	AD1	The Statement of Purpose should be amended and finalised and the Children's Guide developed to allow for the differing ages and abilities of children.
9	AD3	Additional information should be added to the information sent to prospective adopters, such as when the Service may or may not take up the application, a current Statement of Purpose and the fee for inter-country adoption.
10	AD17	A written report on the Service and its outcomes should be received every six months by the council executive.
11	AD23	20% of the Adoption Team staff should hold a PQ award. All Adoption Team staff should have regular refresher courses in safeguarding.

		Staff should be able to access specialist training to assist them in their role.
12	AD9	The Adoption Service should ensure a consistent service of support to birth families and the provision of information about local and national support groups.
13	AD21	The Adoption Service should review its number of staff to ensure there are sufficient skilled and qualified staff to provide an effective service.

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