



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## ADOPTION SERVICE

### **Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council Adoption Service**

**The Woodlands (FPU)  
Manchester Road  
Bolton  
Lancashire  
BL3 2PQ**

*Lead Inspector*  
Jane Ivory

*Announced Inspection*  
25th September 2006      09:30

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

<b>Reader Information</b>	
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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](http://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](http://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.

This report is a public document. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

# SERVICE INFORMATION

<b>Name of service</b>	Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council Adoption Service
<b>Address</b>	The Woodlands (FPU) Manchester Road Bolton Lancashire BL3 2PQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 337480
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<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Mr Nick Robinson
<b>Type of registration</b>	Local Auth Adoption Service

# **SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Conditions of registration:**

**Date of last inspection**

## **Brief Description of the Service:**

Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council offers a full range of adoption and adoption support service through a designated adoption and adoption support team. The family placement service had divided into the fostering and adoption function at the beginning of 2006. As a result of this change the adoption and adoption support team were still in a state of transition at the time of the inspection. There is now a team manager for adoption, who acts as the agency adviser and the adoption support services adviser in Bolton. The team manager for adoption is accountable to the principal manager for children's resource, who is directly responsible to the assistant director for the children and families service. The assistant director is the adoption agency decision maker, with overall responsibility for the service.

Bolton provides the following services for children and adults:

- To match and place children with adopters who can best meet their assessed needs throughout childhood and beyond once adoption has been identified as being in their best interests.
- To prepare children prior to introduction and placement with adopters in an age appropriate way whilst ensuring that the child's own history is understood and preserved.
- To recruit, prepare, assess and approve adoptive applicants who can meet the needs of children needing adoption both locally via the Greater Manchester Consortium and nationally. This includes the recruitment of adopters for older children, sibling groups, disabled children and children from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- To provide a range of adoption support services, either directly or through contractual arrangements with other agencies for adopted children and their families. This includes financial support where appropriate.
- To offer a range of services and information to birth parents in order to make effective plans for their children, where adoption has been identified as being in the best interests of their child.
- To provide a service to families who wish to adopt a child from overseas.

# SUMMARY

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

The inspection was well prepared for with all required pre-inspection material being forwarded as requested. The agency provided the best facilities available to them and engaged in the process as willing participants. The programme that was arranged was well coordinated and very manageable. This enabled the inspection to be carried out with the minimum of disruption and maximum efficiency.

The inspection was carried out over four days, with one extra-day being allocated to the observation of the adoption panel. During the course of the fieldwork interviews were held with key managers and staff. The Independent Panel Chairperson of the adoption panel was also interviewed. An examination of personnel files was undertaken in the offices of Human Resources.

Visits were made to four adoptive families. In addition to this two adoptive families who were in receipt of adoption support services agreed to participate in the inspection. The views of adopters are incorporated into the text of this report. One birth family member was also asked to participate in the inspection. Completed questionnaires were received from adopters/prospective adopters (10), placing social workers (4), and specialist advisers (2). Two questionnaires sent to birth families were returned.

The case files of the adopters visited were read – and the files of children placed with them. Other case files were also examined. Written materials relating to the operation of the agency were read, including policies and procedures, protocols and information provided for children, prospective and approved adopters and social workers.

The inspection also considered the council's arrangements for adoption support services and interviewed staff involved in the assessment, review and provision of these services. The inspection also took place alongside a full inspection of the fostering and private fostering services in Bolton. Readers may find it helpful to consider all three reports for a full overview of the Family Placement Service to Looked after Children in the town.

## **What the service does well:**

Bolton's adoption service is based upon the needs of children. The service continues to place a higher than the national average numbers of children for adoption, with clear evidence from interviews with staff and from case file analysis that permanence through adoption is a well understood and developed practice based upon the best outcomes for children.

Bolton has a committed, knowledgeable and skilled child social care work force, who despite the challenges of the job, demonstrated through their practice that they were motivated to deliver good outcomes for children. Staff members who were interviewed reported that they were well supported by their immediate managers, and that resources for children with a plan for adoption were forthcoming. Social workers throughout the adoption service spoke of the accessibility of their senior managers and of the effective and fluid communication throughout the organisation.

The social workers in the service spoke highly of the support, assistance and knowledge of the adoption team manager.

The service had developed to comply with the Adoption and Children Act 2002. Policies and procedures had been updated and practice had changed or was changing as a result of the new legislation.

The agency recruits, prepares and assesses prospective adopters in the town and is a net contributor to the consortium. Assessment practice varied in standard, however all adopters spoke positively about the skill and experience of their assessing social worker. Comments such as, "Our social worker was very clear about the assessment process and gave us information at all stages. They were very professional." And "Once we were allocated our social worker they have been like a rock to us throughout the process."

The adoption team had dedicated adoption support social workers who provided families with access to a range of services including regular support groups and parenting "theraplay" groups, in addition to individual or multi-agency support.

One of the biggest changes for the service has been the recruitment and employment of an independent adoption panel chairperson. The independent panel chairperson is skilled and knowledgeable in adoption issues. The chairperson and the agency decision maker had an effective working relationship, which was evidenced by the smooth operation of the adoption panel. The panel chairperson and the agency decision maker had arranged a series of regular meetings to discuss panel business and any themes or emerging patterns from the work that the panel had scrutinised.

Bolton has purchased the CHARMS adoption database and is a member of Adoption 22. The effective regional links at all levels ensure that Bolton's children and adopters benefit from close inter-agency working.



The service is proactive in managing service level agreements with other agencies. The independent social work support service to birth parents had been reviewed as a result of this and a new service had been commissioned from a voluntary adoption agency in the area, to meet this need and to ensure a better quality of service. Bolton's commitment to working with and alongside birth parents throughout the adoption planning and placement process was evidenced throughout the inspection. As evidence of this commitment a social worker within the adoption support team had taken over responsibility for reviewing and managing letterbox agreements.

Bolton has a strong culture of performance management. Outcomes for children with a plan for adoption service are closely monitored to ensure that there is no unnecessary delay.

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The service has developed separate children's adoption files and had worked hard to address some of the other areas in the first action plan of 2003.

The family placement service had commissioned an independent review of the service in 2003 to consider whether the adoption and fostering functions should be split into two distinct teams.

At the time of the first inspection in December 2003 the agency had decided to split the family placement service but had not developed a timescale by which this change in service design would be fully implemented. Changes in service management meant that the plan to split the teams was put into place in 2005 and was actioned in early 2006. Although there was some evidence that the transition had been not without some difficulties social workers in the adoption team and in the wider adoption service reported that there had been a clear benefit to having a specialist adoption and adoption support team.

A number of placing social workers spoke of a real "before and after effect", with the adoption team being seen as far more pro-active. As one social worker said, "The allocation a social worker for family finding used to be a bit of a lottery. Now that we have allocated workers in the adoption team things have improved."

The service has a clear strategic and operational vision for the provision of adoption support services. The range and location of adoption support in Bolton is being developed alongside the integrated children's services in the town.

## **What they could do better:**

The adoption service was still in the process of transition from being part of the wider family placement service to becoming a dedicated adoption and adoption support team. The transition had preoccupied managers and staff at a time of major legislative change. Many of the service improvements that are required or recommended should be seen in this context.

The service is still in the process of developing a children's guide for all those children affected by adoption. This requirement is still outstanding from the first inspection and must be addressed in order to take account of all children with a plan for adoption or in receipt of adoption support services.

The manager and the staff in the adoption team recognised that they needed to develop the recruitment strategy to more effectively recruit a range of adopters for the needs of the children coming through the care planning process and who may have been waiting for an adoptive placement.

The quality of assessment practice varied across the team, from very good to poor. At the time of the inspection the adoption team had identified that they were struggling to meet the practice guidance timescales for completing prospective adopters reports. The service must develop systems to ensure that assessment practice is delivered in a timely and effective manner in all cases. In addition to this the service must ensure that every adopter's assessment is subject to the full range of statutory checks and references.

The service must ensure that there is underpinning policy and procedures for staff undertaking adoption support assessments.

The excellent ideas for an adoption support service that is integrated within the wider children's service should be formalised into a coherent multi-agency strategy as part of the services action plan.

Joint working protocols between the adoption support team and the advice and assessment teams should be developed to ensure that the existing child focused child protection practice is underpinned by policy and practice guidance, as part of Bolton's overall safeguarding policy and procedure.

There was a view that the current matching meetings had improved, however more should to be done to clarify the roles and responsibilities of workers in delivering an effective match for the child and their adopters.

The service had good feedback from adopters about the quality of the adoption preparation groups that they offered. One adopter going through the assessment process said " We found the recruitment and preparation groups really useful, it was a good insight into what we were about to undertake." However given the size of the team and the need to address timescales for assessments it may be helpful if Bolton were to consider formalising

arrangements to co-ordinate preparation training with other adoption agencies in the area.

The service would also benefit from considering the need to commission inter-country adoption assessments from a specialist agency, given the low numbers of requests that the agency gets, and the difficulties in maintaining expertise in this area as a result of this.

The minutes of the adoption panel would benefit if they were kept on file with a list of attendees, and details of the date of the panel meeting.

The agency decision maker ensures that their decision is made in a timely way, however written notifications of the decision are sometimes considerably delayed. The service would benefit from reviewing this system, and making arrangements for the written notification of the agency decision to come from the agency decision maker.

Personnel files for all staff in the adoption team had recently been audited. Deficiencies in the personnel records had been identified and addressed at the time of the inspection.

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](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.

# **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)
- Adoptors are given information about matching (NMS 5)
- The functions of the adoption panel are as specified (NMS 10)
- The constitution and membership of adoption panels are as specified (NMS 11)
- Adoption panels are timely (NMS 12)
- Adoption agency decision is made without delay and appropriately (NMS 13)
- The manager is suitable to carry on or manage an adoption agency (NMS 15)
- Staff are suitable to work with children (NMS 19)
- The agency has a robust complaints procedure (NMS 24 Voluntary Adoption Agency only)

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

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

Quality in this outcome area is adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence, which identified that Bolton has a number of skilled and experienced staff in the adoption service, however inconsistencies in the assessment of children's and adopters needs must be addressed in order to ensure that all children with a plan for adoption stay safe and secure.

## EVIDENCE:

Bolton continues to place a higher than the national average number of children for adoption. The service has a well-developed approach to permanency planning and monitors the needs of children coming through the care planning system very closely to avoid unnecessary delay.

The adoption team know the needs of the children with a plan for adoption and the adoption team and adoption panel monitor the needs of children with a plan for adoption on a regular and frequent basis.

Bolton has very few adopters waiting and was always in a position to contribute to the consortium. The adoption team focused much of their recruitment around national adoption week, and the team considered that this

was an area that they were keen to develop now that they were able to focus upon adoption.

The adoption team had only been in operation since the Summer of 2006. As a result of this the social workers in Bolton's adoption team had only just extricated themselves from the majority of their fostering commitments. There was substantial evidence that the recent transition had impacted on the adoption teams ability to deliver prospective adopters assessments within timescale. However placing social workers considered that the adoption team had the potential to offer an enhanced service with one social worker commenting " There has been a real before and after affect. Before the teams split I used to think that the adoption team were not very proactive in family finding. Now that the team has spilt and I have an allocated adoption worker they are much more proactive and the process is clearer. There has been a real improvement."

The adoption team were still involved in supporting some of the wider family placement functions, including the duty system. This is something that the adoption team and service manager remains committed to, however the adoption teams involvement in the wider family placement function should be kept under review in order to ensure the continued service improvement that is required in the adoption team.

Many adopters confirmed that they had waited for some considerable time before they were able to attend preparation training, but that once they had completed this part of the assessment that the process speeded up.

Prospective and approved adopters confirmed that they had access to good, informative preparation training that had helped them to understand the full range of issues surrounding adoption. The team offered three preparation sessions a year. Adopters who wish to adopt a child from overseas may benefit from accessing more specialist preparation training and this is an area that the service is reviewing alongside other agencies in the Adoption 22 network in the northwest region.

If the adoption team is to comply with the new timescales the service must either provide additional preparation or consider formalising arrangements to co-ordinate Bolton's preparation training with other adoption agencies in the area, in order to offer prospective adopters a more timely response.

Many adopters confirmed that the home study had been completed with skill and sensitivity by the assessing social worker and that they had the opportunity of discussing the assessment with a second visitor.

The service ensured that the majority of prospective adopters were subject to the full range of checks and safeguards that were evidenced on file. However in one case the social worker had not sought checks on a family that were

approved as agency foster carers. The need for the service to apply strenuous efforts to ensure that all prospective adopters are evidenced to be safe must form part of the action plan.

Further to this the existing health and safety questionnaire would benefit from being updated to include an assessment of whether adopters have weapons, and to include the risk to small children from window blinds.

Social workers in the Adoption Team had accessed training in completing prospective adopters assessments. The quality of the assessments varied with some workers being far more able to analyse information and evidence parenting capacity. Some social workers were far more able to identify the strengths and vulnerabilities of prospective adopters. The need to identify prospective adopters strengths and vulnerabilities should be part of every social work assessment. The service would benefit if the adoption panel also considered using this practice in making their recommendations.

The need to ensure greater consistency and compliance with the regulations and practice guidance regarding the assessment of prospective adopters should form part of the service's action plan.

Many adopters appreciated the skill and professionalism that their social worker had brought to their assessment. The majority felt that despite the delay at the beginning of the process that once their case had been allocated that their assessments had been progressed in an efficient and effective manner.

Expectations regarding support and contact between prospective and approved adopters were clearly defined in the adoptive carer agreement. Adopters considered that their social workers were responsive to their needs for support and information.

Bolton benefits from a committed adoption panel, with an experienced and knowledgeable independent panel chairperson. The adoption panel has access to sound agency advice and specialist advice and has clear policies and procedures to guide their practice and recommendations.

The adoption panel receives regular adoption service reports which detail the progress of children's plans and approved adopter's circumstances. The report also considers compliance with timescales. The service may wish to consider developing a timescale monitoring tool for all cases coming to panel to have a more current view on the work of the agency.

The independent panel chairperson and the agency adviser have developed and were in the process of implementing the panel member's appraisal process.

The independent panel chairperson has a regular meeting with the agency decision maker to provide feedback to the agency and to receive feedback about their performance.

The adoption panel's deliberations and recommendations are captured in the adoption panel minutes. Copies of the full minute concerning an item are not kept on a child's or adopter's file. The service should consider how it ensures that an accurate record of the decision making process is kept on the child's adoption file or the adopters file for future reference. As a minimum the minute should contain a cover sheet, which identifies the date the recommendation was made and those involved in making the decision.

The Agency Decision Maker was committed to their role and ensured that the decision was made in a timely way.

Although all agency decisions were made in a timely way, a system must be developed to ensure that written notifications are also sent within timescales. Written notifications to adopters would benefit from being sent and signed by the agency decision maker.

Personnel files for all staff in the adoption team had recently been audited. Due to wider organisational changes CRB's for adoption team members had not been renewed after three years. This failure in the system had been acknowledged and addressed by the close of the inspection.

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



# Enjoying and Achieving

## The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- The adoption agency provides support for adoptive parents (NMS 6)
- The agency has access to specialist advisers as appropriate (NMS 18)

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

Standards 6,18,33 and 34

Quality in this outcome area is adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence that Bolton has a developing and increasingly integrated adoption support service which ensures that children and their adoptive families are supported throughout childhood.

## EVIDENCE:

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

Practices concerning assessments for post adoption support were well developed in the service. However the service had recognised that there was a need to formalise the assessment tool used with families when undertaking an assessment for adoption support.

Likewise joint working arrangements and protocols also needed to be formalised to ensure that the existing joint working arrangements with children and families in receipt of adoption support services were underpinned by clear policy and procedure.

Families in receipt of adoption support services stated, "Our social worker has always been there for us. Sometimes things can get very difficult and they do their best to support us... We have really struggled to get proper educational provision for our child and the adoption support social worker comes with us to any meetings at school."

The Adoption Support Workers played a key role in ensuring that children and their adoptive families accessed ongoing support services. There was evidence that the specialist social workers in these posts had developed networks in the

area and region to ensure that children and their adoptive families received ongoing support.

Post approval and post adoption support groups were well established and developing in partnership with a local adoption support agency.

The service had offered a specialist-parenting group that had received very positive feedback from adoptive parents with younger children. The senior practitioner for adoption support acknowledged that the service had identified that more needed to be available for older children and young people and their parents.

Bolton's adoption service benefits from excellent access and support from the medical adviser who ensures children's and adopter's medical reports are scrutinised before panel. They are also available to offer advice and support to adopters concerning any proposed match. Legal advice to the service is also accessible.

The support services are very effective within the available resources with good access to a range of multi-agency support. However some of the excellent practice seen would benefit from being integrated within a wider strategy for adoption support services across the borough.

## **Making a Positive Contribution**

### **The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- Birth parents and birth families are involved in adoption plans (NMS 7)
- Birth parents and birth families are involved in maintaining the child's heritage (NMS 8)
- The Adoption agency supports birth parents and families (NMS 9)

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

Standards 7,8 and 9

Quality in this outcome area is adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence that some birth parents and birth families are very well supported by the service. However more should be done to ensure that birth parents are involved in maintaining their child's heritage.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

The inspection confirmed that Bolton's adoption service is committed to working alongside birth parents throughout the adoption process. Placing social workers efforts to ensure that birth parents wishes and feelings were recorded and available for the adoption panel evidenced this. One example of this could be seen in the involvement of birth parents in the choice of their child's adoption placement.

The service has recently tendered the independent social work support for birth parents with a local voluntary adoption and adoption support agency, in an effort to improve the uptake of this valuable service.

The adoption information exchange or letterbox had been reviewed and now benefited from dedicated social work oversight. Contact agreements had been reviewed and the service was in the process of developing a robust system to manage this growing area of work.

The adoption and adoption support team played a key role in ensuring that life story work was undertaken and completed in a timely way. There was an expectation that adopters would meet birth parents before the placement of a child.

The adoption team manager and adoption support team worked hard with their colleagues in the child-care teams to ensure that staff were aware of the need to preserve and maintain a child's heritage. Child-care team managers and

social workers confirmed that they were committed to gathering information at the earliest opportunity. However more must be done at a strategic level to ensure that life work is completed within the child's timescale, with a recommendation to bring the completed initial life story work to the first adoption review, or in some instances to the adoption panel.

# Management

## The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

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

Quality in this outcome area is adequate. This judgement was made given that management systems are improving in the adoption service. However, the agency needs to ensure that social workers have the training, support and supervision to ensure that good outcomes for children and their families are achieved in a timely manner.

## EVIDENCE:

There was a statement of purpose in place that had been reviewed in 2005 and had been formally approved by the executive of the council. It clearly outlined the aspirations and operations of the agency and was written in an easy to read style. The policies and procedures of the agency, many of which had been recently reviewed and revised, supported the statement of purpose and most indications were that the agency operated in line with these. The service had acknowledged that the range of children's guides for all children with a plan for adoption was still a work in progress. This is an area that remains outstanding from Bolton's first adoption inspection and must be addressed as part of the service's action plan.

The information provided for prospective applicants is of a very good standard; it gives a clear indication of all the implications and processes of adoption, including profiles of the kind of children requiring placements, and it also specifies the range of people that the agency wishes to recruit. It is a well - presented pack that is welcoming and clearly aimed at providing all relevant information in an accessible and encouraging format.

The adoption team reported that they were well supported by their manager, and the managers involved in the adoption service reported that they were well supervised and supported by the service manager.

All managers involved in the adoption service were suitably qualified and experienced. The inspection found evidence that the Adoption Team worked well within the wider constraints of the service and that the relationship between the team and placing social workers was generally positive and had improved since the team had moved into a designated adoption and adoption support team.

The adoption team had separated from the fostering team in January 2006. Between January and June the adoption team had continued to hold some fostering cases and to participate in allocation meetings and the family placement duty rota. The managers and the staff in the service acknowledged that the transition had not been without some difficulty, and that some aspects of joint working would need to remain, including the adoption teams participation in the duty rota. However the adoption team had by the last day of the inspection been withdrawn from the whole team attendance at the weekly family placement allocation meeting. This had freed up some extra time for the adoption team staff who face the challenge of implementing the practice guidance concerning timescales for assessments of adopters.

The team manager dealt with the few complaints made against the agency sensitively, efficiently and effectively. Withdrawals and de-registrations were also managed well.

Staff in the adoption service had accessed training in the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

All staff said that they were familiar with the council's personal development and annual appraisal system. Staff reported that they received regular professional supervision from the adoption team manager and from the senior practitioner in the adoption support team.

The service should establish, without delay, a robust system of file auditing: children's adoption files showed little or no evidence of any management oversight, and the quality of some of the paperwork was poor. It is of utmost importance that children's adoption files reflect an accurate record of all work undertaken in relation to the adoption, which will be readily understood by the adoptee at any future date.

Adopters' files were generally well ordered, with many files keeping a copy of contemporaneous notes from the assessment. However these files too, lacked management oversight. Decisions made during supervision should be recorded on all files and any signatures on documents should be dated and supplemented by the manager's or social workers full name.

The service should develop and implement effective quality assurance systems which evidence the supervision and management decision making process of children's and adopters' assessments.

Administrative staff were seen to be hardworking and sensitive to the nature of the work of the service. However, the agency should consider the adequacy of its provision.

# 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

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

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

<b>STAYING SAFE</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>2</b>	2
<b>4</b>	2
<b>5</b>	3
<b>10</b>	3
<b>11</b>	3
<b>12</b>	3
<b>13</b>	1
<b>15</b>	2
<b>19</b>	2
<b>24</b>	N/A
<b>32</b>	2

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

<b>ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>6</b>	2
<b>18</b>	3
<b>33</b>	X

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



Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

### **STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	AD1	3.2 (C ) AAR 2003 and AAR 2005	The service must provide a children's guide for all children with a plan for adoption or in receipt of adoption support services. Original timescale not met	30/03/07
2	AD32	9 AAR 2003	The service must prepare and implement a written policy, which safeguards children placed for adoption or in receipt of adoption support services, and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse.	30/01/07
3	AD13	A and C A 2002	The service must make arrangements for the written notification of the agency decision to be made within timescale.	30/03/07
4	AD34	7 AAR 2003	The service has written policies and procedures concerning the assessment and provision of adoption support.	30/03/07
5	AD4 AD25	A and CA 2002	The service must ensure that prospective adopters are subject to the full range of statutory checks, in line with regulation	30/01/07

			and practice guidance. Outcomes of checks must be kept on file.	
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## 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	AD2	The service should develop an ongoing recruitment strategy, which is kept under review and is informed by the needs of the children waiting locally.
2	AD4	The service should consider how prospective adopters assessments are completed within practice guidance timescales.
3	AD4	The service should consider developing a co-ordinated approach with neighbouring adoption agencies to offer adopters more timely access to preparation training.
4	AD4	The service should considering commissioning a specialist service for adopters choosing to adopt a child from overseas.
5	AD15 AD19 AD28	The service should develop a robust system to ensure that CRB's for all staff working in the agency are renewed every three years.
6	AD6	The service must develop written policies and procedures for each service it provides, including adoption support services and joint working within the service and with other agencies.
7	AD8	The service should consider how to improve the delivery of life story work within the child's timescale.
8	AD10	The service should develop a system to enable the adoption panel to assess and scrutinise the timeliness of children's and adopter's assessments, on a case by case basis.
9	AD13	The service should make arrangements for the agency decision maker to sign the written notification letter to adopters concerning the outcome of their decision.
10	AD16	The service must keep under review and consider the impact of the involvement of the adoption team in the wider family placement function of the service.
11	AD20	The service should develop structures and systems to ensure assessments and approvals of prospective adopters are managed and implemented effectively.
12	AD25	Decisions by supervisors are recorded on case files and are

		legible, clearly expressed, signed and dated.
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