



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Local Authority Adoption Services

Surrey County Council Adoption Service

Beaufort House, Children`s Services

Mayford Green

Woking

Surrey

GU22 0PG

12th November 2003

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

Surrey County Council Adoption Service

Headquarters Address

Beaufort House, Children`s Services, Mayford Green,
Woking, Surrey, GU22 0PG

Adoption Service Manager

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Certificate number of this adoption service

Date of last inspection

N/A

Date, if any, of last SSI themed inspection of adoption service

16and17th Dec
1999

Date of Inspection Visit		12th November 2003	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Rosie Dancer	125017
Name of Inspector	2	Sean White	127556
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		Ms. Annie Mclver	

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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 Surrey County 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.

The adoption agency is part of Surrey County Councils Children's Services Department. The children's services in Surrey were subject to a re-organisation programme in September 2002 and a level of disruption during any reorganisation is inevitable.

The agency consists of three teams; Permanency Team 1 which focuses on inter-country adoptions, kinship care and step-parent adoption; Team 2 which focuses on the adoption of Surrey LAC and provides the post adoption service; and the family finding and recruitment team which focuses on adoption and permanency for children with complex needs. The inspectors took the view that disruption to services for adopters and children has been kept to the minimum.

The agency is part of a consortium of local authorities and a voluntary adoption agency. The consortium aims, by collaborative working arrangements, to provide the best possible permanent homes for children in care and to ensure that children are placed with adopters quickly and efficiently.

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.)

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard had minor shortfalls.

The agency has a draft statement of purpose which requires some minor amendments and additions to ensure it complies with the regulations. When complete the statement will be formally approved. The agency provides children with the BAAF guide to adoption and the inspectors were informed that in addition to this a guide is being developed for a younger age range. The agency has developed policies and procedures for staff which accurately reflect the statement of purpose.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Matching) Standard 2

This standard was fully met

The inspectors were satisfied that the agency has effective strategies for the recruitment of adopters who could provide a good match for children likely to need or who have a plan for adoption. The agency's family finding team provides a focused service for children who have been awaiting a placement for a period of time or have complex needs.

Prospective and approved adopters (Standards 3, 4, 5, 6,)

4 of the 4 standards assessed were fully met

The agency provides prospective adopters with comprehensive packs containing information about the adoption process. Overall, the inspectors noted that adopters were satisfied with the initial and subsequent responses by the agency in respect of their application although it seems there were some difficulties that the inspectors believe to have arisen during and immediately following the changes implemented in the adoption teams. The agency has a formal process for the preparation and assessment of adopters, and the linking and matching processes were noted by the inspectors as being child focused.

The inspectors noted that the timescale arrangements for inter-country adopters are rather longer than for domestic adopters.

The inspectors took the view that the agency practice of a team manager carrying out a second opinion visit following completion of the home assessment was good practice.

There is a range of support provided to adopters; the family placement worker and adopters develop support plans at the point a link is made.

Birth Parents and Birth Families (Standards 7,8,9)

3 of the 3 standards assessed were met

The agency has an established post adoption sub-group which focuses on the development of post adoption services to birth family members. The inspectors noted that, overall, there was an adequate level of support available to birth parents and that there are plans to develop further this service. It was also noted that the agency deals with a considerable number of arrangements in respect of face to face and letter box contact.

Adoption Panel and Agency Decisions (Standards 10, 11, 12, 13.)

The agency operates two panels which are held on an alternating weekly basis. One of the inspectors observed a panel session and was impressed at the way business was conducted. The panel remained child focused throughout the session and considered each case in detail prior to a recommendation being made. Prospective adopters and a foster carer who came to the panel were welcomed warmly and allowed to express their views. The minutes of panel meetings were noted as being comprehensive and well written.

There is a system in place to ensure that the decision making process takes place as soon as is possible following the date of the panel.

Management of the Adoption Agency (Standard 14, 15.)

1 of the 2 standards assessed were met; 1 standard had minor shortfalls

The manager of the agency has a wealth of experience in the childcare field and in management. The inspectors were of the view that she has worked hard to develop the agency into an efficient service. The inspectors viewed the manager's personnel file and noted that while a police check was on file there was not evidence that an enhanced CRB check had been undertaken. The inspectors were subsequently informed that such a check had been carried out, was satisfactory but that it had not been placed on the file.

Provision and Management of the Adoption Agency (Standards 16, 17, 18.)

1 of the 3 standards assessed were fully met; 2 standards had minor shortfalls

Overall the inspectors concluded that the agency is run in an effective manner. There have been some difficulties with adoption workers holding non-adoption cases but the inspectors were informed that this is to be resolved in January 2004.

It was evident that everyone involved in the agency had an enthusiasm for the work and a commitment to providing the best possible service.

There were appropriate specialist advisors available for consultation by the agency. The manager should develop protocols in respect of the roles of the specialist advisors.

Employment and Management of staff (Standards 19, 20, 21, 22, 23)

3 of the 5 standards assessed were fully met; 2 standards had minor shortfalls

All social workers employed are suitably qualified and experienced. The inspectors were impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of the social work staff, managers and office staff that they met.

There is a range of internal and external training available for social workers and it was noted that there is an ethos of skills sharing among the social work staff.

Staff receive supervision and annual appraisals, and there are regular team meetings held. The inspectors noted some inconsistencies in respect of the frequency and recording of supervision sessions and some uncertainty among staff about inter-country adoption issues, however the inspectors were satisfied that this was an issue which the manager was addressing through training and supervision.

The agency has a very low staff vacancy rate.

Records (Standard 25, 26, 27, 28.)

3 of the 5 standards assessed were fully met; 3 standards had minor shortfalls

In general the files that were sampled were well organised. It was noted, however, that contemporaneous notes of assessment visits were not kept, the inspectors discussed this with the manager and the manager informed the inspectors that she was in the process of introducing a system whereby social workers notes will be kept on files and a diary sheet would be kept on each file to record day-to-day contact with adopters.

The agency has an access to records policy and information sharing is subject to clear procedures.

There is a written policy on case recording.

In respect of the recording of complaints, and the recording of prospective adopters who are counselled out of the process, the inspectors have recommended that the manager ensures that the quality of recording is improved.

The inspectors noted that CRB checks had not been carried out on those staff who were employed prior to the Criminal Records Bureau's operation from April 2002.

Fitness of Premises (Standard 29)

This standard had minor shortfalls

The office premises viewed by the inspectors met the standards. The inspectors share the concerns of the social workers, adopters, panel chair and manager about the venue in which the panel is held because of issues around confidentiality.

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:

The failure to satisfy regulatory requirements were insubstantial.

**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	2	LA1	The manager must amend the statement of purpose, ensure that it is formally approved and provide a copy of the completed statement to the NCSC.	By 31/01/04
2	2 (3)	LA16	The manager must ensure that all non-adoption cases are transferred to the appropriate childcare team.	By 31/01/04
3	6 and 11	LA19	The manager must ensure that all staff, advisers and others involved in the agency have a satisfactory CRB check and ensure that copies of the checks are kept on personnel files.	By 31/01/04

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	LA7	The manager should monitor the timescales in providing support to birth parents.
2	LA18	The manager should develop protocols for the specialist advisers.
3	LA20	The manager should establish a consistent approach to the frequency of and the format for supervision sessions, and monitor the situation in respect of the supervision in inter-country adoption issues.
4	LA20	The manager should monitor the situation and consider ways in which clarity of roles between all teams and departments can be achieved.
5	LA20	The inspectors recommend that the manager continue to monitor the situation in respect of responses to initial enquiries.
6	LA20	The manager should consider ways in which the interface between the adoption teams could be improved.
7	LA20	The manager should consider adopting, for the monthly joint team meeting, the format used at the individual team meetings.
8	LA25	The manager should ensure that social workers recording of assessment visits are kept on adopter's files.
9	LA27	The manager should ensure that the records kept of complaints meet the standards with specific reference to recording outcomes.
10	LA27	The manager should review the records in respect of those people counselled out of the adoption process to ensure that records are clear and concise. The inspectors recommend that the manager monitor the situation and consider ways in which clarity of roles between all teams and departments can be achieved.

11	LA29	The agency should give consideration to using more appropriate premises for adoption panel meetings to ensure confidentiality is maintained for applicants attending the panel.
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- 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	NO
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	NO
• 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	12/11/03
Time of Inspection	10.00AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	54
Number of Inspector days	7.5
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)	19.75

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

The agency has a draft statement of purpose which requires some minor additions in order to comply with Regulation 2 (1) Schedule 1. The manager informed the inspectors that the statement of purpose would be reviewed, as a minimum, on an annual basis and that the Executive of the council will formally approve the statement of purpose when it is completed.

The agency uses the BAAF Children's Guide and the manager said that a second guide is being developed to meet the needs of a younger age range. The manager provided the inspectors with a pack provided by the agency for social workers to use with children who are to be placed for adoption. The pack contains books about adoption suitable for use with children from two to ten years of age and there is also a computer programme available which allows a personalised version of one of the books to be developed for each child.

The agency has access to a range of appropriate interpreting services.

The agency's policies, procedures, written guidance for staff and information provided to the public accurately reflect the statement of purpose.

The inspectors were satisfied that people who worked for, or were involved in, the agency were aware of the contents of the statement of purpose.

Has the Statement of Purpose been reviewed annually?
(Record N/A if the information is not available)

NA

Has the Statement been formally approved by the executive side of the council?

NO

Is there a children's guide to adoption?

YES

Does the children's guide contain all of the information required by Standard 1.4?

YES

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 inspectors noted that the agency, through Team 2 and The Family Finding Team, uses a 'two-pronged' approach to the recruitment of adopters. This means Team 2 focuses on the recruitment of adopters for children who have less complex needs and by definition are likely to be easier to place, while the Family Finding Team focuses on the recruitment of adopters for specific children with more complex needs in a more targeted way.

The inspectors noted that, at an early stage, a permanency-planning meeting is held in respect of each child and a decision reached as to whether the child's needs would best be met via the mainstream resource list, or if specific needs mean there is unlikely to be an appropriate match for the child. If the latter is the case the Family Finding Team will be allocated the case and will commence a targeted recruitment campaign for that child.

In the event that a family cannot be found within a reasonable timescale any compromises, which are considered in terms of matching, are fully assessed and the matter is referred to the adoption panel for consideration.

Files sampled showed that, dependent on the age and level of understanding of the child, children's views are taken into account through both the Court and the Looked After Children planning and review processes.

In the last 12 months:

How many children were identified as needing adoptive families?

35

How many children were matched with adopters?

43

How many children were placed with the service's own adopters?

34

How many children were placed with other services' adopters?

7

How many children were referred to the Adoption Register?

3

In the last 12 months, how many children were matched with families which reflected their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language?

40

What percentage of children matched with the adoption service's adopters does this represent?

93

%

How many sibling groups were matched in the last 12 months?

10

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?

13

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?	3
<p>The agency provides all enquirers, whether for domestic or inter-county adoption, with a comprehensive information pack that clearly sets out the eligibility criteria and the agency's approach to working with prospective adoptive families. For prospective inter-country adopters the agency advises them to contact the Department for Education and Skills to ensure that they have the most up to date information. Responses in questionnaires completed by prospective adopters were varied as to the speed of the response to their initial contact; some said that they were dissatisfied with the initial response, while others stated that they had been very satisfied with the speed their enquiry had been dealt with.</p> <p>The information about children requiring, or who are likely to require, an adoptive placement is presented at each permanency planning meeting and this information is used during the introductory evenings for prospective adopters in order to prioritise those applicants who are most likely to meet the needs of these children.</p> <p>Enquirers are informed by telephone during their initial contact, and through the information pack subsequently sent to them, of the preparation and support services available. Following this there is a series of information days during which prospective adopters meet with adoptive parents, birth mothers and adopted adults. The manager said that the agency also tries to introduce prospective adopters to others who have adopted or fostered and share similar issues with the applicants, such as having birth children or adopting sibling groups.</p> <p>The agency provides profiles of the children waiting for adoption in the information pack and makes copies of the Be My Parent and UK adoption publications available at the training groups.</p>		

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?

3

The agency has a formal process for the preparation, assessment and approval of prospective adopters which involves the following:

- An introductory evening
- A childlessness workshop
- A 2 day information group
- A 4 session preparation group
- A full home study

The introduction meetings are held on a two-monthly basis.

For inter-country adopters the agency provides specific training groups that all applicants are required to attend prior to the commencement of a home study. This specific training is held twice a year. Responses to questionnaires from a small sample of inter-country adopters showed that there was some dissatisfaction about the speed with which the agency dealt with their application; the inspectors' view is that it is likely that this has been experienced due to the frequency of the training. The inspectors acknowledge, however, that the agency, as a Local Authority, has a duty to prioritise the placement needs of children living in Surrey and it seems that this is where the emphasis is placed.

The agency works hard to ensure that the organisation of the preparation groups facilitates applicants' attendance. For example, venues are accessible to wheelchair users, are in a central position, run in the evenings as well as during the day and excellent directions to the venues are provided.

The agency asks all applicants who have attended the preparation groups to complete an evaluation form. This information is fed back to the training sub-group which meets, as a minimum, twice a year to consider if changes in the programme are required.

The manager informed the inspector that the agency will prioritise foster carers who wish to adopt the children in their care and that they receive the same service as other prospective adopters.

The preparation and assessment processes focus on enabling prospective adopters to develop a very clear understanding about the specific needs that a child adopted from the care system is likely to have. The assessing social worker explores with prospective adopters the range of needs they would feel most confident about meeting.

The agency uses the BAAF Form F when undertaking the home study which provides the format for the report to panel.

The agency carries out all the required checks under this standard and carries out additional checks such as contacting previous significant partners of both applicants and children who have lived with either applicant in these relationships.

The inspectors were impressed with the agency's practice of carrying out second opinion visits; this involves the team manager visiting the applicant in order to validate the social work assessment.

The three families interviewed by the inspectors were very satisfied with the service they had received during the recruitment, preparation and assessment process. The inspectors also received 11 completed questionnaires and a letter from prospective adopters which, overall, demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the agency.

Standard 5 (5.1 – 5.4)

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?**

3

Approved adopters are provided with clear written information about the matching, introduction and placement processes. Foster carers caring for the child are also provided with information about how they can help 'move a child on' to an adoptive placement. A letter and leaflet are also sent that explain the role of the adoption register and the process for adding approved adopters names to it.

There is a formal process in place for the matching process. If a link seems possible the prospective adopters are provided with a copy of the child's BAAF form E and the care plan. If the prospective adopters wish to proceed, the child's social worker and the family placement social worker will meet with the prospective adopters. If, following this meeting, all are agreed that a link is appropriate the adopters meet the foster carers and any professionals involved with the child. The prospective adopters also will have an opportunity to see the child in a non-identifying situation. If all are still agreed that a match is possible the case will then go to panel for a matching recommendation.

The agency has developed a planning agreement which is signed by the adoptive parents and the social workers for the family and the child. This agreement includes contact arrangements, telling the child about his/her adoptive status and an agreement in respect of adoptive parents making notifications to the agency in the event of a child dying.

Prospective adopters provide a life book of photos and information, the inspectors viewed a sample of these and found them to be child focused and well presented.

At the time a link has been made the prospective adopters are provided with support from the family placement social worker and the child's social worker.

Does the local authority have written procedures for the use of the Adoption Register?

YES

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

3

There is a system of support available for adoptive parents and children which commences at the point of a link being made through the introduction and placing stages. This support system continues up until an adoption order has been made. The manager said that the family placement social worker and the adopters devise a tailor made support package which is aimed at meeting both their, and the child's, specific needs. The inspectors noted that the files sampled reflected that this is the usual practice and that all adopters are provided with membership of adoption UK for 3 years.

The agency runs a range of post adoption support groups; during 2003 the groups were, Understanding Attachment, Handling Difficult behaviour, Attachment part 2, the Impact of Change for Children and Talking to Children about Adoption. The manager informed the inspector that the agency is working with The Nurturing Network and the consortia partners to develop parenting courses and specific post adoption training for adopters.

The agency also has the services of a psychotherapist who is available to work with adopters and children on specific issues and provide support.

The manager said that for inter-country adopters support is provided from when a match is proposed. The family placement social worker who carried out the home study makes a visit to discuss support needs and continues visiting throughout the placement process.

As part of the preparation and assessment process the agency ensures that adoptive parents are aware of the need to share, and keep safe, the information with the child to help maintain and develop a positive sense of self-identity.

The agency has a draft confidentiality agreement in respect of handling information; this is to be implemented in December 2003.

Issues of discrimination and disadvantage are addressed through the introduction and preparation groups.

The agency procedures in the event of difficulties are adequate and the agency has access to primary mental health input for children and has a level 2 contract with the Post Adoption Centre. In the event of the disruption of a placement the agency procedures state that an independent chair will be used to chair a disruption meeting. The manager informed the inspectors that currently the independent chairs do not have the capacity to chair disruption meetings. The agency contingency plan involves the adoption panel considering disruptions and making recommendations based on the findings to inform future practice. The inspectors view this as being a satisfactory plan.

The inspectors noted that there have been no disruptions of children's placements for more than 12 months.

Number of adopter applications started in the last 12 months	61	
Number of adopters approved in the last 12 months	47	
Number of children matched with the local authority's adopters in the last 12 months	34	
Number of adopters approved but not matched	25	
Number of adopters referred to the Adoption Register	3	
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?	3
<p>There is a post adoption sub-group, which works on the development of post adoption services.</p> <p>The agency handles a vast amount of post box contact arrangements and a number of direct contact arrangements. The agency offers a counselling service for birth family members.</p> <p>The agency has the capacity to provide a link worker at the point that adoption has been identified as the plan for the child. The link worker role is to work with the child’s keyworker in offering support and information to birth parents. The agency has produced a leaflet that explains the planning process for adoption, which will be provided to birth parents.</p> <p>The inspectors received a completed questionnaire from a birth family member; who confirmed that, although there was support available, it had not been provided in a timely way. The inspectors were also informed by other sources that the appointment of a link worker does not occur in every case and the inspectors formed the view that it was likely that this had been the case in respect of the birth family member who had to wait for support. The inspectors recommend that the manager monitor the timescales in providing support to birth parents.</p> <p>There is a local self-help group for birth parents and the agency provides information to birth parents in respect of a range of local and national services such as: The Post Box service, the Post Adoption Centre and the organisation Norcap. The agency also employs an independent counsellor who works with birth families whose children have been adopted.</p> <p>The birth parents and other significant birth family members are provided with opportunities through the court and care planning for looked after children processes to be involved in the making of the permanency plan for the child. This includes plans for post adoption contact. Birth family members’ views are contained in the Court documents that are filed to the Court during the Care Proceedings and in the BAAF Form E’s, the documents presented to the adoption panel for approval.</p> <p>The manager informed the inspectors of planned future developments to the service that the agency provides to birth families which, when implemented, will provide them with excellent opportunities to be more involved in the adoption process.</p>		

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?****3**

The child's social worker, in conjunction with the link worker, has the task of helping the birth family share information about the child and to provide photographs for the child's life story book. Parents are also encouraged to provide details of children's medical histories in order that health needs of the child can be identified.

Contact needs will be discussed at this stage and birth families will be encouraged and supported in thinking about how the lines of communication can be established and maintained.

Standard 9 (9.1)

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?****3**

The appointment of a link worker at the stage when adoption is identified as the plan for the child provides an opportunity for adoption plans to be discussed with the birth family at the start of the process. The birth family is notified of the various supports available both within the agency and from external organisations.

The inspectors' overall view is that the agency meets this minimum standard and were pleased to note that further developments planned in this area will improve the support the agency offers to birth parents.

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?	3
<p>The adoption panel was properly constituted and the panel members were suitably qualified and experienced; all members, including the chair and vice chair, are appointed through an appropriate interview process.</p> <p>The business carried out during the inspection was done so in an efficient child centred manner and the information provided to the panel was considered in detail before recommendations were made.</p> <p>The BAAF publication, Effective Panels, is provided to all members and the agency panel operates in accordance with this comprehensive guidance.</p> <p>Prospective adopters are routinely invited to attend the adoption panel that their case is being heard at and are invited to put their views across. The agency has produced a useful leaflet for prospective adopters which details the panel process, the constitution of the panel, a useful map of the venue and details of the appeal process should they not agree with a panel's recommendation. The agency has also produced a feedback form for prospective adopters to complete about their experience of attending the panel. The information is used to improve practice and procedures.</p>		

Standard 11 (11.1 – 11.4)

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?**

3

The appointment of panel members is subject to a formal recruitment and interview process, which includes an enhanced CRB check. If appointed a new member is required to observe at least one panel meeting. Panel members are required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

The agency provides new panel members with an initial induction session prior to taking up the post and a second induction session is carried out within 2 months of appointment.

Over the past 12 months there have been 3 training/workshop sessions for panel members and adoption staff covering, Assessing Risk and Competency in Adopters, Contact workshop and Applicants Attending Panel-Getting it Right. Panel members have also attended a training session on the National Adoption Standards. The manager provided the inspectors with details of the planned training sessions for next year which includes training on the Adoption and Children act 2002.

The panel chair also writes a newsletter on a quarterly basis which provides panel members with useful information about such issues as training, updates on statutory issues and information about new posts and new members of staff. The inspectors commend the panel chair for this initiative.

Is the panel a joint panel with other local authorities?

NO

Does the adoption panel membership meet all of the statutory requirements?

YES

Standard 12 (12.1 – 12.3) 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
<p>There are weekly panels held comprising of two sets of panel members. They are held on a Tuesday (week 1) and a Thursday (week 2). The panel the inspector attended was the Thursday panel. Both panels have a dedicated panel administrator and a dedicated minute taker. The manager informed the inspectors that both individuals receive training in house and from BAAF in their respective roles.</p> <p>The inspectors noted that the minutes from panel meetings are comprehensive and that the system for ensuring panel members have papers in advance of the meeting is effective.</p> <p>The inspectors identified some concerns about the venue the panels are held in, this is discussed further in standard 29.</p>		

Standard 13 (13.1 – 13.3) 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?	3
<p>The agency decision maker, the family placement services manager, reads all the panel papers and the panel minutes and consults with the panel chair prior to her decision making. In the main, once a decision has been made, all appropriate people are informed of the decision in writing within reasonable timescales.</p>		

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?	3
<p>The manager and senior managers of the agency are all suitably qualified and experienced to manage the adoption agency.</p> <p>The manager has over 15 years experience in a childcare setting and a CQSW qualification, a BA in Public Administration and Applied Social Studies, a Diploma in Advanced Social Work and a MA in Organisational Consultancy.</p> <p>The inspectors were satisfied that the manager exercises effective leadership and noted that she has successfully effected a re-organisation of the adoption agency in order to centralise the service provided to children and adopters.</p> <p>The manager informed the inspectors that her job description is currently being rewritten and will include all issues contained within the standards.</p>		
<p>Does the manager have Management NVQ4 or equivalent?</p>	<p>YES</p>	
<p>Does the manager have at least 2 years experience of working in a childcare setting in last 5 years?</p>	<p>YES</p>	

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

The manager informed the inspector that for all new members of staff, including managers, the recruitment process involves following up references with telephone enquires to each referee. Evidence of this occurring was noted on the personnel files sampled.

The manager had a satisfactory police check on file but the inspectors did not see evidence to show that she had a satisfactory CRB check at the enhanced level. The inspectors have been informed that there had been a satisfactory check in respect of the manager; evidence of this must be placed on file.

The manager informed the inspectors that it is the policy of Surrey C.C. to renew CRB checks every 3 years.

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?

2

The inspectors were satisfied that, overall, the agency operates in line with the statement of purpose.

However, due to difficulties in respect of recruitment to the childcare teams there are a number of children looked after cases held by the adoption social workers. These workers had transferred from the children's teams to the adoption team and it was planned that the cases remained allocated to the workers for a short period but due to a number of issues the cases have not been transferred. Social workers, and their managers informed the inspectors, that, at times, if a crisis situation occurs with one of the children, the adoption worker has to respond; this can compromise their work in adoption. The inspectors were informed that there is a clear plan in place for the transfer of all of these cases to the appropriate teams in January 2004. The inspectors were pleased to note this.

The manager informed the inspectors that the statement of purpose would be reviewed through the business planning process.

There are clear arrangements in respect of the person in charge when the manager is unavailable and staff members spoken to were clear about this and their roles and responsibilities.

Lines of communication between managers, workers and other relevant professionals were good with the inspectors noting working relationships developing between the children's and agency social workers. The manager informed the inspectors that she carries out regular audits of supervision sessions and appraisals to ensure that workers are fulfilling their role as detailed in their job descriptions and to monitor conflict of interest situations.

The agency has a clear anti-discriminatory policy which staff and applicants are provided with and training in such issues is provided to staff and adopters.

The agency has clear, concise written procedures for the use of the adoption register and all adopters are informed of the register following approval.

Number of complaints received by the adoption service in the last 12 months

4

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated

1

Standard 17 (17.1 – 17.3)

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?

3

The agency has robust procedures for monitoring and controlling the work of the agency. The statement of purpose and the adoption agency policy, both in draft form, are tools used to monitor performance along with the recently reviewed adoption agency procedures. There are quarterly senior management reviews and an annual report is presented to the children's services executive committee.

The inspectors viewed the information provided to purchasers of services such as the charges made to intercountry adopters and charges made by the court in the event of a stepparent adoption. Domestic adopters are informed that an adoption allowance may be payable to them in respect of a specific child.

The systems through which the executive side of the council monitor the effectiveness of the agency are robust with the senior management of the agency and the executive taking hands on approach to the task of ensuring outcomes for children are good.

An executive member of the council sits on the Thursday adoption panel and therefore receives information on a fortnightly basis in terms of the most recent cases and issues considered by panel.

How frequently does the executive side of the council receive written reports on the work of the adoption service?

Monthly?	
Quarterly?	YES
Less than Quarterly?	

Standard 18 (18.1 – 18.5)

The adoption agency has access to specialist advisers and services appropriate to its needs.

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

The agency has access to a comprehensive range of specialist input and services. These include primary mental health services for children looked after, a psychotherapist who provides treatment and support, an independent counsellor who supports birth parents, a medical adviser who scrutinises all medicals for children and adopters and is available to meet with adopters to discuss medical issues which may have arisen. The medical adviser attends all adoption panels. Legal advice is available from Surrey's childcare legal team and a solicitor from this team attends each adoption panel meeting.

In respect of external specialist services the agency accesses the services of the following:

- A consultant in respect of attachment difficulties
- The post adoption centre
- BAAF for general advice
- Oasis and overseas adoption helpline
- A consultant in respect of kinship care

The agency also proposes to seek an external consultant who specialises in issues of race and culture, to advise staff in respect of the placement of children who have dual heritage.

The agency did not have written protocols in respect of the specialist advisers and the inspectors recommend that these be developed.

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 agency follows the local authority procedure in respect of the recruitment and selection of staff, which involves a formal interview, written references being requested, which are verified with the referee over the telephone.

There is training for managers who have the responsibility for the recruitment and selection of staff, which the manager and one of the team managers have attended.

Staff had been provided with induction training, including child protection training, and the manager informed the inspectors that this training was being updated.

The inspectors sampled a selection of staff personnel files. The inspectors noted that for staff employed within the agency for some years there were no CRB checks on file, only out of date police checks. The inspectors require that the manager ensures that all CRB checks are applied for as a matter of urgency.

All case holding social workers employed within the agency have either a CQSW or a DipSW qualification and were able to demonstrate to the inspectors a good working knowledge of adoption issues. The staff employed within the agency have a diverse range of experience and skills.

The agency has the training capacity available to meet the target of having at least 20% of social workers obtaining or being in the process of obtaining a post qualifying child care award.

The agency provides an in house training programme for staff which meets the standards. In addition the social work staff informed the inspectors that they can access external training relevant to their work and that they are encouraged to share such training and other skills with the team, for example in team meetings.

The agency is part of the education service and as such offers an integrated service to children in the areas of care and education. The agency has strong links to health agencies.

The agency has a mix of workers in terms of their experience and skills. Newer members of staff are supported through their initial home study and there is a system of mentoring in place.

The agency employs 5 social workers who specialise in post adoption work.

Specialist advisors are checked by the agency in respect of their professional qualification and training as detailed in standard 11 is provided for specialist advisors who sit on the panel.

The agency does not employ unqualified social workers in an adoption social work role. The agency does from time to time have students working on placement within the agency, who are supervised by a qualified worker.

The support workers allocated to work with parents in a link role are qualified social workers.

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?

17.86

%

Standard 20 (20.1 – 20.12)

Staff are organised and managed in a way which delivers an efficient and effective service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The organisation of the teams allows the agency to work in a focused way and provide specialist input into the work carried out. While the organisation of the service is relatively new (September 2002) the inspectors take the view that the management team have worked hard to minimise the disruption to staff and the adoption service provided.

The manager has the appropriate skills and qualifications to manage the agency on a day-to-day basis. The manager informed the inspectors that particular tasks, which are delegated from time to time, are only given to senior social workers who have the relevant skills and knowledge to carry out them out effectively. This is monitored in supervision sessions.

The manager had recently (September 2003) revised the workload management system which aims to improve the services and achieve better outcomes for children. The social workers spoken to about the system confirmed that there is still the capacity to enable them to undertake specific pieces of work that they have a special interest in.

The agency carries out planning on an annual basis for the preparation and recruitment of adopters. There are systems of monitoring such issues as adopters' satisfaction with the panel process and monitoring timescales of each stage of the preparation process.

Social work staff should receive supervision on a monthly basis. The inspectors viewed a random sample of 4 workers supervision notes and some inconsistency in the frequency and quality of recording of the sessions were found. Some social workers felt that, for inter-country adoption issues, the supervisors knowledge was limited, which can create uncertainty at times about how to progress work. The manager was aware that some social workers and their supervisors were in a learning process and was addressing this through training and supervision.

The inspectors recommend that the manager establish a consistent approach to the frequency of and the format for supervision sessions, and closely monitor the situation in respect of the supervision in inter-country adoption issues.

Supervision agreements are in place.

The arrangements for team meetings are that each team has a meeting on a 2-3 weekly basis; teams 1 and 2 also meet together on a monthly basis. The family finding team meet as a group on a 2 weekly basis with one of these weeks being an allocation meeting.

Following discussions with the workers involved the inspectors took the view that links between teams 1 and 2 were strong but that the links between the family finding team and the other two teams should be strengthened.

The inspectors recommend the manager consider ways in which the interface between all the adoption teams could be improved.

The inspectors also noted some inconsistencies in the recording of the team minutes; the inspectors recommend that for the monthly joint team meeting minutes the format used at

the individual team meetings be adopted.

The agency has adequate clerical and administrative support. The inspectors noted that some social workers felt there was a lack of clarity about the role of the administrative staff following the recent reorganisation and the inspectors take the view that all staff have experienced significant changes in their working roles therefore some confusion is inevitable.

The inspectors identified some uncertainty among children's social workers about the role of the link worker. The inspectors recommend that the manager monitor the situation and consider ways in which clarity of roles between all teams and departments can be achieved.

As stated in standard 3, the inspectors noted some inconsistency in how adopters felt their initial enquiry had been responded to. The inspectors discussed this issue with the manager and concluded that it is likely that the dissatisfaction arose during the initial period of the reorganisation, as there is now a designated resource and information officer who deals with the majority of initial enquiries.

The inspectors recommend that the manager continue to monitor the situation in respect of this issue.

The agency has access to a wide range of professionals and professional input can be accessed prior or post placement.

The manager informed the inspectors that staff are provided with a pack as part of the induction process containing all issues contained within standard 20.12. The inspectors viewed one of these packs.

Standard 21 (21.1 – 21.4)

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?	3
<p>The inspectors' assessment in respect of the adequacy of the staffing establishment was that the agency's staffing levels are satisfactory and that the vacancy rate is low. At the time of the inspection the manager had just appointed people to 1.5 posts.</p>		
<p>There were no significant concerns noted in respect of unallocated pieces of work, except for adoption workers holding looked after children cases as discussed in standard 16. The agency has appropriate contingency plans in the event of a member of staff being absent.</p>		
<p>The arrangements for the retention of staff include staff being able to work school hours, flexible working hours and time off in lieu.</p>		

Total number of social work staff of the adoption service	19.75	Number of staff who have left the adoption service in the past 12 months	4
Number of social work posts vacant In the adoption service.	0.5		

Standard 22 (22.1 and 22.3)

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

The inspectors took the view that the agency has sound employment practices in place, satisfactory support mechanisms for staff and the staff with whom the inspectors met with appeared very committed and contented in their work.

There is a written whistleblowing policy in place.

Standard 23 (23.1 – 23.6)

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?**

3

There is a range of training available for staff through the county's training department, which over the months prior to the inspection had included, an induction workshop, brief solution based therapy, child development and contact issues. The inspectors noted that there is a system of information sharing by staff through the cascading of written material and by individual staff members presenting information from training sessions at team meetings. The county adoption advisor provides training for staff in adoption issues on a rolling basis.

Some of the staff members with whom the inspectors spoke said that, in their view, the internal training programmes did not always meet their needs because of the limited level of their content.

The workers confirmed that external training such as that provided by BAAF could be accessed on request.

There is an appraisal system in place; from the personnel files sampled it was clear that, in general, appraisals occur on an annual basis.

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)

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
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There are satisfactory policies and procedures in place in respect of confidentiality issues and the storage of case records.

Staff, panel members and agency advisors are all required to read and sign a confidentiality agreement.

Records of checks for adopters and members of their household are kept on the adopters' case files.

The inspectors viewed a sample of 6 adopters' files and 4 children's files. The inspectors noted that the overall quality of information contained within the files was very well written, analytical and insightful.

The inspectors noted that social workers recording of assessment visits were not available on files. The inspectors discussed this issue with the manager and were informed that it had been planned that social workers are to be provided with a book for each adoptive family in which to record each visit, and that these books will be kept on file.

The recording system the agency uses for children is congruent with the LAC systems.

The inspectors noted that case supervision notes are placed on the respective adopter and children's files.

Standard 26 (26.1 – 26.2)		
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
<p>The manager informed the inspectors that information such as the adopters Forms F and the children's Forms E are sent to other agencies but that anonymity is protected.</p> <p>The agency has an access to records policy and procedures and provides separate information packs for birth relatives, adult adoptees and adoptive parents.</p> <p>The revised procedures manual contains details for staff about how to deal with requests for access to information.</p>		

Standard 27 (27.1 – 27.6)		
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
<p>There is a written policy on case recording.</p> <p>Each team manager keeps records of staff employed including students, complaints and allegations. The inspectors viewed the complaints folder for one of the teams and found that the outcome of the complaint was not clearly recorded. The inspectors recommend that the manager develop a clear system for filing the records of complaints which allows easy access to information regarding the outcome of the complaint.</p> <p>The inspectors also viewed 1 file in respect of prospective adopters who had been counselled out of the process. The inspectors found that the reasons for and process of counselling out were appropriate but that the quality of the recording could be improved upon. For instance, not all notes were dated, some notes were illegible, and there was not a clear system for recording contact with the adopters on the file. The inspectors recommend that the manager revise the system of recording in the event of adopters being counselled out of the process.</p> <p>The manager informed the inspectors that senior managers carry out file audits on a monthly basis. The files viewed by the inspectors showed evidence that this had occurred.</p> <p>The agency uses the facilities of the Surrey History Centre for the archiving of post adoption records which the manager informed the inspectors meets the standards and regulations in respect of archiving. The inspectors did not visit the centre.</p> <p>The inspectors noted that the majority of recording on case files was typed.</p>		

Standard 28 (28.1 – 28.2)

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?

2

The inspectors looked at a random sample of files and found that files of people who had been employed by the agency prior to the requirement for CRB checks had police checks but no CRB check. It is a requirement that all staff members, members of the adoption panel and administration staff are subject to a CRB check at the enhanced level and that all such checks are renewed on a 3 yearly basis. Evidence of the checks should be placed on the individual personnel files.

The staff files viewed met the standards in all other respects.

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

The inspectors viewed one of the three offices used by the service. It was noted that there was appropriate office accommodation and equipment for social workers and office staff.

Paper records are stored in a secure room in fire resistant lockable cabinets. A central server backs up electronic records on a daily basis. The rooms housing IT systems are locked overnight and the premises have a full alarm system.

The premises are open to the public during office hours.

The manager informed the inspectors that the premises and contents are adequately insured.

The county council has a disaster recovery plan in place which includes the provision of emergency premises and the safeguarding and back up of records.

The premises used for the adoption panel meetings were of concern to the inspectors in that, due to how the rooms are located, little privacy is afforded to the panel or adopters. The rooms adjoin each other and conversations can be overheard. There was unanimous agreement among the staff, managers, adopters and the panel chair that the premises are not suitable and the inspectors recommend a concerted effort continue be made to find a more appropriate venue.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

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 12 November 2003 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

YES

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 17 February 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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

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 _____ of Surrey County 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 _____ 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.