

Jigsaw Adoption

Inspection report for voluntary adoption agency

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Inspector Rosie Dancer
Type of inspection Full
Provision subtype Domestic adoption

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Date of last inspection N/A

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Service information

Brief description of the service

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: An agency demonstrating and exceeding the characteristics of a good judgement where children and young people are making significantly better progress and achieving more than was expected in all areas of their lives.

Good: An agency where children and young people, including those with the most complex needs, have their individual needs met and their welfare safeguarded and promoted. They make good progress and receive effective services so they achieve as well as they can in all areas of their lives.

Requires improvement: An agency that may be compliant with regulations and observing the national minimum standards but is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of a good judgement. It therefore requires improvement to be good. There may be failures to meet all regulations or national minimum standards but these are not widespread or serious; all children's and young people's welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

Inadequate: An agency where there are widespread or serious failures which result in children and young people not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome: **Inadequate**

This is an agency in its first year of operation. No children have been placed with adopters who have been approved by the agency. There are five approved adopters waiting for placements, including one set of adopters for whom approval is being reconsidered. There are two adopters at stage one of the process and two at stage two. The agency has met the timescales for the work that it has done.

The way that the agency is structured fails to provide staff with the support and guidance that they need. The responsible individual who is currently overseeing all of the work does not have the necessary qualifications, skills, knowledge or experience in social work, adoption practice or safeguarding children. The leadership has access to a qualified consultant, but her expertise is only called upon when leaders have a problem. This arrangement is inadequate, because they do not have a clear understanding about social work and adoption practice. Consequently, they do not always recognise when there may be a concern.

There is a lack of strategic planning. For example, there are no training plans for staff and there is no strategy for supporting adoptive families. There has been a failure to monitor the quality of the work carried out. The scope of the manager's tasks is limited to supervision of the assessment reports on adopters. Her working hours are too limited for her to be able to complete this work effectively. For example, a potential safeguarding matter had neither been sufficiently assessed nor included in a prospective adopter's report. The manager did not know about this

concern. Assessment reports are clearly written and are analytical, but they do not cover all the issues that are identified.

Safeguarding practice is inadequate, because there is a lack of understanding among staff about how to deal with an allegation. Issues have not been referred in a timely way, nor have they been notified to Ofsted. People who have been the subject of an allegation have not been sufficiently supported while investigations have been carried out. Staff recruitment practice is not thorough, therefore it cannot assure leaders that all staff are suitable people to be working for the agency.

There is no social work oversight or supervision of the other important pieces of work that the agency undertakes, such as family finding. Improvements are needed to the record keeping to ensure a clear audit trail of all of the work carried out. There are no job descriptions for many staff roles, and this leads to a lack of clarity about who is responsible for what. There are gaps in the policies and procedures, so staff are not effectively guided in all their work.

Panel membership lacks sufficient diversity. The central list includes a number of people affected by adoption, but there is an absence of independent members who are specialists in a specific field, for example education or mental health. There is no panel adviser. A social work representative who is on the central list does not have the required experience to serve as such on the panel.

Interested parties who approach the agency feel very welcome. They report that they like the ethos of the agency and find the website, assessment process and preparation informative. The social workers are described by prospective adopters as thorough, and they say that they carry out their work sensitively. There is access to a medical adviser who is experienced in adoption work, and provides sound guidance and advice to both the agency and to prospective adopters when they are considering a child.

There are good administrative systems that staff and adopters find easy to use. Both access the information that they need quickly and easily.

Areas of improvement

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003, the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>* Registered provider, manager and branch manager – general requirements:</p> <p>8.—(1) The registered provider, the manager and the branch manager (if any) shall, having regard to—</p> <p>the size of the agency or (as the case may be) branch and the agency’s statement of purpose; and the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who may be, or have been, placed for adoption by the agency, carry on or manage the agency or (as the case may be) branch, with sufficient care, competence and skill. The registered provider shall ensure that the responsible individual undertakes from time to time such training as is appropriate to ensure that he has the experience and skills necessary for carrying on the agency. The registered provider shall ensure that the manager and branch manager (if any), undertake from time to time such training as is appropriate to ensure that he has the experience and skills necessary for managing the agency or (as the case may be) branch. This is with specific reference to ensuring:</p> <p>there are sufficient qualified and experienced senior members of staff in day-to-day charge of the agency;</p> <p>the agency is effectively monitored and controlled;</p> <p>there are clear policies and procedures in relation to the assessment and preparation of adopters;</p> <p>there is a strategy for supporting placements and is underpinned by clear policies and procedures;</p> <p>the responsible individual and the manager have appropriate training. (The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003 Regulation 8 (8) (a) (b) (2) (3))</p>	<p>17/10/2016</p>
<p>* Arrangements for the protection of children:</p> <p>10.—(1) The registered provider and the manager shall prepare</p>	<p>17/10/2016</p>

<p>and implement a written policy which—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard from abuse or neglect children placed for adoption by the agency;</p> <p>or by another adoption agency but with prospective adopters approved by the agency as suitable to be adoptive parents in accordance with the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983(a);</p> <p>and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect.</p> <p>The procedure under paragraph (1)(b) shall provide in particular for liaison and cooperation with any local authority which is, or may be, making child protection enquiries in respect of the child;</p> <p>where the child is placed with prospective adopters, the prompt referral to the local authority in whose area the child is placed of any allegation of abuse or neglect;</p> <p>where the child is not placed with prospective adopters, the prompt referral to the local authority in whose area the principal office of the agency is located of any allegation of abuse or neglect; notification to the registration authority of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries;</p> <p>written records to be kept of any allegation of abuse or neglect and the action taken in response;</p> <p>consideration to be given to the measures that may be necessary to protect children placed with prospective adopters following an allegation of abuse or neglect;</p> <p>arrangements to be made for persons working for the purposes of the agency, prospective adopters and children who have been placed for adoption by the agency, to have access to information that would enable them to contact the local authority referred to in sub-paragraph (b) or (c) (as the case may be);</p> <p>and the registration authority, regarding any concern about child welfare or safety.</p> <p>With specific reference to ensuring that any allegations received by the agency are referred immediately to the relevant safeguarding agencies and professionals;</p> <p>ensuring there is effective partnership working with agencies concerned with child protection;</p> <p>ensuring that the designated person responsible for managing allegations is trained, competent and knowledgeable about safeguarding children;</p> <p>ensuring that the person about whom an allegation has been made is adequately supported, by an independent person, during the investigation. (The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the</p>	
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<p>Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003 Regulation 10 (1) (a) (b) (2) (a) to (g))</p>	
<p>Staffing of the agency:</p> <p>The registered provider, the manager and, in relation to any branch, the branch manager, shall ensure that there is, having regard to the size of the agency or (as the case may be) branch and the agency’s statement of purpose;</p> <p>and the need to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of children placed for adoption by the agency;</p> <p>or by another adoption agency but with prospective adopters approved by the agency as suitable to be adoptive parents in accordance with the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005, a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent, and experienced persons working for the purposes of the agency or (as the case may be) branch.</p> <p>With specific reference to ensuring that there are sufficient hours given to qualified social workers who have experience in adoption work working for the agency to meet the agency’s needs. (The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003 Regulation 13 (a) (b)</p>	<p>17/10/2016</p>
<p>Fitness of workers:</p> <p>The registered provider, the manager and, in relation to any branch, the branch manager, shall not employ a person to work for the purposes of the agency unless that person is fit to work for the purposes of an agency;</p> <p>or allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the agency unless that person is fit to work for the purposes of an agency.</p> <p>This paragraph applies to any person who is employed by a person other than the registered provider, in a position in which he may in the course of his duties have regular contact with children who may be, or have been, placed for adoption by the agency.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of an agency unless he is of integrity and good character; he has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work he is to perform;</p> <p>he is physically and mentally fit for the work he is to perform;</p> <p>and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to him</p>	<p>17/10/2016</p>

<p>in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2. (The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003 Regulation 14 (1) (a) (b) (2) (3) (a) (b) (c))</p>	
<p>Employment of staff:</p> <p>The registered provider, the manager and, in relation to any branch, the branch manager, shall ensure that all permanent appointments of staff are subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation;</p> <p>and provide all employees with a job description outlining their responsibilities.</p> <p>The registered provider, the manager and, in relation to any branch, the branch manager, shall ensure that all persons employed by the agency receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal;</p> <p>and are enabled from time to time to obtain further qualifications appropriate to the work they perform. (The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003 regulation 15 (1) (b) (2) (a) (b)) With specific reference to: ensuring that there are job descriptions for all roles including panel members, specialist advisers and the leaders; developing a training programme for all people working for the agency that includes safeguarding training; ensuring all people working for the agency have regular supervision including managers and the leadership.</p>	<p>17/10/2016</p>
<p>19: Notifiable events:</p> <p>If, in relation to an agency, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 4 takes place, the registered provider and the manager shall without delay notify the person indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of that table. Any notification made in accordance with this regulation which is given orally shall be confirmed in writing within 14 days. (The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003 Regulation 19 (1) (2))</p>	<p>17/10/2016</p>
<p>Review of statement of purpose:</p> <p>The registered provider and the manager shall—</p> <p>(a) keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose; and (b) notify the registration authority (The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003 regulation 4 (a) (b))</p>	<p>17/10/2016</p>

<p>Requirement to appoint an agency adviser and a medical adviser:</p> <p>The adoption agency must appoint a senior member of staff, or in the case of a joint adoption panel the local authorities whose panel it is must by agreement appoint a senior member of staff of one of them, (referred to in this regulation as the 'agency adviser') to assist the agency with the appointment (including re-appointment), termination and review of appointment of members of the adoption panel;</p> <p>to be responsible for the induction and training of members of the adoption panel; to be responsible for liaison between the agency and the adoption panel, monitoring the performance of members of the adoption panel and the administration of the adoption panel;</p> <p>and to give such advice to the adoption panel as the panel may request in relation to any case or generally. The agency adviser must be a social worker and have at least five years' relevant post qualifying experience and, in the opinion of the adoption agency, relevant management experience. (The Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011 Regulation 8 (1) (2))</p>	<p>17/10/2016</p>
<p>Review and termination of approval:</p> <p>The adoption agency must review the approval of each prospective adopter in accordance with this regulation. A review must take place whenever the adoption agency considers it necessary but otherwise not more than one year after approval and thereafter at intervals of not more than one year.</p> <p>When undertaking such a review the adoption agency must make such enquiries and obtain such information as it considers necessary in order to review whether the prospective adopter continues to be suitable to adopt a child;</p> <p>and seek and take into account the views of the prospective adopter. If, at the conclusion of the review, the adoption agency considers that the prospective adopter may no longer be suitable to adopt a child, it must prepare a written report ('the prospective adopter's review report') which includes the agency's reasons;</p> <p>notify the prospective adopter that the case is to be referred to the adoption panel;</p> <p>and give the prospective adopter a copy of the report inviting the prospective adopter to send any observations to the agency within 10 working days beginning with the date on which that report is given to the prospective adopter. At the end of the period of 10</p>	<p>17/10/2016</p>

<p>working days referred to in paragraph (4)(c) (or earlier if the prospective adopter’s comments are received before that period has expired), the adoption agency must send the prospective adopter’s review report together with the prospective adopter’s observations to the adoption panel. The adoption agency must obtain, so far as is reasonably practicable, any other relevant information which may be required by the adoption panel and send that information to the panel. The adoption panel must consider the prospective adopter’s review report, the prospective adopter’s observations and any other information passed to it by the adoption agency and make a recommendation to the agency as to whether the prospective adopter continues to be suitable to adopt a child. The adoption agency must make a decision as to whether the prospective adopter continues to be suitable to adopt a child and regulations 30B (2) to (11) apply in relation to that decision by the agency. (The Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 Regulation 30D (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8))</p>	
<p>The central list: 3.—(1) Subject to regulation 5, an adoption agency (d) must maintain a list of persons who are considered by it to be suitable to be members of an adoption panel (‘the central list’), including— one or more social workers who have at least three years’ relevant post-qualifying experience.</p>	<p>17/10/2016</p>

* These requirements are subject to a statutory requirement notice.

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- During an investigation the agency makes support, which is independent of the agency, available to the subject of the allegation. (National minimum standard 22.11)
- Ensure the agency has and implements a written policy that clarifies the purpose, format and content of information to be kept on the agency's files, on the child's and prospective adopters' case records. (National minimum standard 27.1)
- Clear arrangements are in place to identify the person in charge when the manager is absent. (National minimum standard 25.5)
- Where an agency will not learn the full history by conducting a criminal record check and other background checks on the prospective adopter, for example, where they have lived abroad for an extended period, it should decide whether

it should carry out any other checks or take up additional references. The agency should ensure it has sufficient information to justify continuing with Stage One but not delay the approval process. If it decides not to proceed, it should provide the prospective adopter with a clear written explanation of the reasons why. (Statutory guidance on adoption, July 2013, page 65, paragraph 3.26)

- Where the criminal record checks disclose previous convictions or cautions for non-specified offences, the agency may consider that the prospective adopter is not suitable to adopt. In such circumstances, the agency must exercise its discretion and decide whether to continue with stage one. If it decides not to proceed, it must notify the prospective adopter in writing, with reasons, without delay. (Statutory guidance on adoption, July 2013, page 66, paragraph 3.30)
- The panel central list should include individuals who are not employed by the agency and whose appointment would help reflect the independent nature of the panel. Suitable members could include specialists in education, child and adolescent mental health, race and culture; and also those who have personal experience of adoption. (Statutory guidance on adoption, July 2013, page 20, paragraph 1.29)

Experiences and progress of, and outcomes for, children and young people

Judgement outcome: **Not judged**

No placements have been made following the agency's registration.

Quality of service

Judgement outcome: **Requires improvement**

The agency has no children placed, therefore there were limitations on assessing this area. The inspection focused on the areas of initial contact, progress through stage one and stage two, the panel process and the limited amount of family-finding activity that has taken place.

People's experience of their initial contact with the agency is positive. They feel highly valued and welcomed by the agency. They are speedily offered an office interview and a subsequent home visit. They describe these stages as being informative and that their feelings of being valued are strong. Assessment timescales are good, and people report a fast response to their enquiries and queries both at this early stage and later on in the process.

The agency has a website and the information is useful, but in some areas it is misleading. The provider successfully addressed this during the inspection.

There has been one completed preparation course that was reported by attendees as being good. This was delivered by a person who had been trained and was experienced in delivering training. Prospective adopters attending this course said that they were provided with a good view of the needs of children waiting for adoption and the complexities of parenting traumatised children. One adopter called this course 'excellent' and another said, 'it opened our eyes to the challenges; the trainer was inspirational.' As there have been no children placed, it was not possible to assess the effectiveness of the training in practice. A second preparation course was in the process of being delivered, with content based on the initial course. However, this was being delivered by people who were not trained or experienced in providing a course.

The information in the prospective adopter reports is clear, concise and analytical, but there is a failure to ensure that all assessments contain relevant information about the applicants. For example, one assessment did not report an offence that a prospective adopter had been convicted of. The manager was not aware of this information and there are no records to show who made the decision that the information was not relevant. The failure fully to assess and analyse all aspects of the applicants' lives meant that the panel recommendation and subsequent decision making were flawed.

Adopters are positive about their social worker. One said their worker was 'Excellent, targeted and intrusive but pleasant, and made them feel comfortable and secure.' They went on to say that they felt really well supported by their social worker. Another prospective adopter said that their social worker was 'insightful, patient,

understanding, probing, and very sensitive and child focused.'

Prospective adopters understand their right to an assessment of their adoption support needs from the local authority. There is no strategy for supporting families once they have a child living with them. No children have been placed, so there has been no family affected directly at the time of the inspection, but there was a lack clarity by the agency about what support services are available to adoptive families. The lack of a support strategy is likely to pose significant difficulties to adoptive families, and the potential for placement breakdown is high.

Approved adopters are supported in finding a child. There is a system of referral to the national adoption register, and they are encouraged to search for children through the other resources available. They are supported to understand information provided by the local authority about a child who they are considering. For example, the agency's medical adviser discusses the implications that a child's health needs may have on their progress and on the family. However, a lack of expertise among staff in placing children for adoption means that the family-finding process is not well coordinated. The agency manager does not have oversight of this work. There are no records made of the family-finding process, and this makes formal monitoring impossible. There is a lack of understanding by the leadership about the complexity of this work and a lack of skill in dealing with approved adopters' emotional needs when they are considering specific children.

There is an independent panel chair appointed, but she has not been available to chair two of the three panels so far. There is a vice-chair who has taken over the role. She also provides some advice to the agency on an informal basis. There is no panel adviser. The majority of members have had experience in adoption. However, the overall membership lacks expertise in relevant fields such as education, child and adolescent mental health, race and culture. The social work representative does not have relevant experience in children's social work. No six-monthly panel report has been produced and, as the first panel was in January 2016, this is now due.

The agency decision making is undertaken with due rigour, based on the available information, and decisions are made in a timely way. However, the decision maker is the manager of the agency and this poses a conflict of interest, as she is making decisions on the work that she has been responsible for signing off.

Safeguarding children and young people

Judgement outcome: **Inadequate**

There is a lack of staff experience in safeguarding, child protection and social work, and this is of significant concern. There is a heightened risk that issues of a safeguarding nature will go undetected and are insufficiently managed. The responsible individual is the safeguarding lead, but has no expertise in a safeguarding or a child protection role. He fails to demonstrate that he understands the requirements of this key role. For example, he does not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of information-sharing protocols with safeguarding professionals, nor the roles of professionals concerned with safeguarding children. Neither the responsible individual nor the staff have undertaken safeguarding training. The lack of understanding about safeguarding has led to uncertainty among leaders about the

action required following an allegation received during the assessment process about a prospective adopter. Action was taken, eventually, and information was passed to the relevant professionals. These professionals reported that the responsible individual, once aware of what he should do, did cooperate with the investigation.

People who are the subject of an allegation have not been supported during the investigation process. In one example, the agency failed to keep prospective adopters updated with the progress of its investigation. The process took over three months to complete and this delayed a review of the prospective adopters' approval being conducted. This delay risked causing an unnecessary period of anxiety and uncertainty for the prospective adopters. In addition, there was a failure by the agency to inform Ofsted about this matter, as regulations require. Upon reflection, the responsible individual has now made links with the designated officer for child protection at the local authority.

Staff understand the impact that abuse and trauma have on a child. Through the preparation training and assessment process, prospective adopters have developed an understanding about the effects that abuse and trauma are likely to have had on a child placed with them. They showed that they have further researched these issues for themselves and thought about how a child's emotional well-being impacts on their behaviour. They have thought about ways that they can help a child to manage their behaviour, with the child's emotional needs in mind. The impact of this learning and increasing awareness cannot be fully tested, as no children have yet been placed.

Staff and panel members' recruitment and vetting procedures are inadequate. The agency accepts CVs and does not ask applicants to complete an application form. This means that limited information is provided to inform the shortlisting process. No information about any disciplinary action is collected, nor about why an applicant has left a role working with children or vulnerable adults. Additionally, there is no reference request form issued to referees to cover these issues. Only one referee is contacted to verify the reference, and this conversation is not recorded. References for some members of staff could not be found. The agency has no policy on carrying out checks on people who have lived and/or worked overseas. One member of staff had been working for the agency for a period of time before a disclosure and barring certificate had been evidenced as having been obtained.

Leadership and management

Judgement outcome: **Inadequate**

Insufficient attention is paid by leaders to developing a cohesive and highly skilled, trained and experienced staff group. The manager who worked for the agency at the time of registration has left. A new manager was appointed who is qualified, skilled and experienced in adoption work, but she only works for three hours per week and is employed only to oversee assessments. The subsequent lack of monitoring oversight by suitably qualified and experienced people of its work has led to Jigsaw reacting to safeguarding events, rather than anticipating and planning for them. In addition, there is little forward planning and strategic development by leaders.

The agency employs one part-time social worker. She is qualified, but does not meet

the restriction on writing report regulations. The leadership understands that the social worker needs to be supervised, but the limited hours that the manager works do not allow close enough supervision. Sessional workers are also commissioned to undertake assessments of adopters. A social worker said that they found the manager supportive. They said they were 'very comfortable with her scrutiny.'

There is no sense of the people working for the agency being a team. The manager and the adviser have never met each other. The adviser is used on a consultancy basis and does not have an overview of the work of the agency.

There is a lack of structure and process in much of the operation of the agency. For example, there are no formal policies and procedures on undertaking initial visits or the assessment and preparation of adopters. A significant amount of the agency's work, for example on family finding and initial visits, is not being recorded by agency workers and is not overseen by the manager. While it was stated that there are team meetings and weekly meetings, these are not recorded. There is no audit trail of decisions and actions. Therefore, individual and collective accountability and responsibility are not clear.

There is a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities and, apart from those of the social work and management role, there are no job descriptions. The manager and social workers report to the directors, who have no social work experience. This means that the guidance and support that they receive fails to provide sufficient professional oversight.

The responsible individual and manager have had no training since the agency opened. The social worker has had some training in writing prospective adopter reports and working therapeutically with families. However, there is no training plan in place to ensure that all those working for the agency are well trained and demonstrate up-to-date knowledge and understanding of adoption issues.

There is a statement of purpose to inform interested parties about what the agency aims to provide. This needs some amendment to ensure that it meets regulations and contains information that is current, for example the staffing arrangements of the agency.

There are secure arrangements for keeping records confidential and a good level of understanding about its importance. The good administrative systems are reported by staff and prospective adopters to be easy to use. The agency has appropriate insurance cover. There is a well-meaning commitment to adoption and a will to deliver an ambitious service. It is clear that there has been major investment in the setting up of this agency, but the insufficient leadership arrangements, such as ensuring that the agency is sufficiently staffed, have had a negative impact on the quality and safety of the service.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards, and to support services to improve.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of voluntary adoption agencies.