

Jigsaw Adoption

Jigsaw Adoption Limited

Third Floor, The Griffin, 12 The Broadway, Amersham HP7 0HP

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this voluntary adoption agency

This is a small voluntary adoption agency which recruits, prepares, assesses and approves applicants who are wanting to adopt. The agency undertakes family finding, is involved in the matching processes and provides pre- and post-adoption support.

Inspection dates: 24 to 28 July 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and parents are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The voluntary adoption agency is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 25 July 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection

Compliance notices were issued following the full inspection on 25 July 2016. A monitoring visit was undertaken on 18 October 2016 and the provider had complied with the notices issued.

Key findings from this inspection

This voluntary adoption agency requires improvement to be good because:

- Staff recruitment practice is not sufficiently rigorous.
- There is confusion between the senior managers about who is the designated safeguarding officer.
- Not all prospective adopters understand the ways in which children's past experiences may make them more vulnerable to emotional difficulties and exploitation in the future.
- The arrangements for monitoring and developing the service are underdeveloped.
- The manager does not have a management qualification.
- Not all adoption support is formally assessed and planned for.
- There is a lack of clarity about how post-adoption support will be accessed and provided.
- There is no guide for children about adoption support.
- There is no training plan for staff.
- Records are incomplete, have not been audited and do not provide a clear picture of the work carried out.
- Challenge to local authorities is weak if actions in children's reviews have not been addressed or essential paperwork has not been provided to the agency.

The voluntary adoption agency's strengths:

- Prospective adopters feel welcomed.
- Family finding is effective.
- Children's moves to their new family are supported well.
- Children have begun to settle and make progress in their learning and emotional well-being.
- Children's health is catered for effectively.
- Children enjoy a range of educational and fun activities.
- The leadership, management and staff are committed to improving the lives of children.

What does the voluntary adoption agency need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003, the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 or any other relevant legislation, and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered provider, the manager, and the branch manager (if any) shall, having regard to 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 Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003, Regulation 8(1)(a)(b))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the agency provider receives written reports on the management and outcomes of the agency every six months. ■ monitoring systems are effective. ■ a proactive approach is taken to the development of the service to meet its growing needs, for example in relation to the provision of post-adoption support. ■ the time given to the role of responsible individual is reviewed. 	15/09/2017
<p>The registered provider, the manager and in relation to any branch the branch manager, shall ensure that the adoption support services provided to any person are appropriate having regards to the needs for such services identified by an assessment carried out by the agency or by a local authority. (The Voluntary Adoption Agencies (Amendment) Regulations 2005, Regulation 24F)</p>	15/09/2017
<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, 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))</p> <p>In particular, develop a training plan for staff, and evaluate the quality</p>	15/09/2017

<p>and impact of training contracted staff have undertaken.</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; 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. 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; he is physically and mentally fit for the work he is to perform; and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to him 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>15/09/2017</p>

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure there is clarity about who is the designated professional lead for safeguarding. Designated professional roles should always be explicitly defined in job descriptions. Professionals should be given sufficient time, funding, supervision and support to fulfil their child welfare and safeguarding responsibilities effectively. (Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children 2015, page 57, paragraph 4)
- Prospective adopters are prepared to become adoptive parents in a sensitive way, which addresses and gives them skills, knowledge and practical techniques to manage the issues they are likely to encounter. (National minimum standard 10.9)
In particular, ensure that adopters understand how children may be vulnerable to emotional difficulties and exploitation as a result of their past experiences.
- Ensure the agency implements a written policy that clarifies the content of information to be kept on the agency's files, and on the child's and prospective adopters' case records. (National minimum standard 27.1)
- The manager should regularly monitor all records kept by the agency to ensure compliance with the agency's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents, and to identify patterns and trends. Take prompt action to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (National minimum standard 25.2)
- The adoption panel should provide quality assurance feedback to the agency every six months on the quality of reports being presented to the panel. This should include whether the requirements of the Restrictions on the Preparation of

Adoption Reports Regulations 2005 have been met, and whether there is a thorough, rigorous, consistent and fair approach across the service in the assessment of the suitability of prospective adopters. (National minimum standard 17.2)

- The agency should take action to address any issues of concern that they identify or which is raised with them. (National minimum standard 25.7)

In particular, ensure prompt challenge to local authorities that fail to provide identified services or paperwork.

- The service user knows, and receives written information about: the adoption support service they are to receive; what the service is designed to achieve; what is involved in the particular service provision; and how the service will be monitored to ensure that it is delivering the intended outcome. (National minimum standard 15.3)
- Develop a Children's Guide to adoption support services and ensure it is provided to the child by the adoption agency. Ensure the guide is appropriate to the child's age and understanding and includes a summary of what the service sets out to do for children. (National minimum standard 18.6)
- Appointees to the post of manager who have no management qualifications must enrol on a management training course within six months, and obtain a relevant management qualification within three years of appointment. (National minimum standard 19.4)

Inspection judgements

The overall experience and progress of service users: requires improvement to be good

Prospective adopters feel valued and welcomed. A prospective adopter said, 'we are not just a number or a case.'

Applicants are provided with information about adoption. They say that this information helps them to understand the needs that children who are waiting for an adoptive placement have.

The preparation course prepares applicants well for adopting a child. From this learning, prospective adopters have a good understanding about the impact that abuse and trauma have on children's behaviour and attachment styles.

The social work assessments of applicants' suitability to adopt provide an honest view about their areas of strengths and weaknesses. A social work manager commented that the assessments 'are a true reflection of the prospective adopters'. Prospective adopters confirmed that they had been able to contribute to their assessment reports and had felt part of the process.

Prospective adopters say that the agency is proactive in helping them to find a child or children. They felt that the workers were sensitive to their needs and kept them informed. There are no records made of the work carried out in this area.

Prospective adopters said that they were supported through the matching process. They explained that time was spent with them talking about any aspects of a child's needs that they were not sure about. This helped them to understand the implications of caring for the child. Some prospective adopters have been supported to attend life-appreciation days and found this useful. They felt these meetings inform them about what it is like caring for the children on a day-to-day basis. The agency has not been successful in getting the records of these meetings from local authorities.

Prospective adopters have worked closely with children's foster carers, the agency and the local authority during the introductions. Work with the foster carers has provided them with a clear understanding of the child's needs and preferences. Work with the agency and local authority has helped prospective adopters to understand: the importance of seeing their child's current behaviour in the context of their past experiences; the stages that children go through when forming attachments; and how to develop strategies to support children to manage their behaviour more effectively during this period of time. As a result, children have begun to develop healthier attachments to their prospective adopters, made improvements in their self-esteem and are developing a sense of belonging to their new family.

As children settle in their new families, they begin to achieve well in their learning. For example, one child who could not read or write has learned to do this. Another child was reported by her teachers as having made exceptional progress in her reading and writing.

Prospective adopters advocate for their child's education and have regular contact with the school. For some children, there have been significant delays in updating their personal education plans and the agency has not effectively challenged this.

Prospective adopters understand the importance of making sure that their children are asked about their views and wishes. For example, they are asked about the activities that they would like to do, and their likes and dislikes are catered for. Children feel that they are listened to.

Children learn from the activities that their prospective adopters provide for them. They have chances to learn and develop new skills. For example, one family has set up a calendar with a programme of activities that include trips to museums and zoos, and time to support them to do their homework. Children have plenty of fun time, such as going on play dates and day trips with the family.

The children placed with adopters are of a young age, but they are supported well to develop age-appropriate skills that help them to become more independent. For example, they learn about getting dressed, seeing to their own personal hygiene and preparing for wet weather by putting on their own wellington boots.

Children's routine health needs are met. For example, they are registered with a general practitioner, dentist and optician, and attend routine visits to these professionals. More specialist health needs are recognised by prospective adopters and catered for. For example, it was noticed that one child was squinting. Her eyes were tested and she is now the proud owner of a pair of red glasses. Other prospective adopters had concerns about their child's cognitive skills and they have made sure that the child has been referred to a paediatrician.

Delays in the provision of support services by the local authority, such as getting one child speech therapy, have not been effectively challenged by the agency. This has meant that some matters have been left to drift for some time. However, in one case when therapeutic work had not been arranged by the local authority, the agency provided a worker to undertake this. The agency does not formally assess and plan for meeting adoption support needs. While prospective adopters understand in principle what the work is aiming to achieve, there are no written assessments setting out what and how the work will be done, what the aims are and the arrangements for review.

Prospective adopters have developed good relationships with most staff. Where there has been an incompatibility issue, the manager has dealt with this effectively. One family does not view the agency as their primary source of support, but sees the local authority worker as filling this role. However, most prospective adopters overall feel well supported by the agency, and one said that the agency had been 'fantastic'.

There have not been any children formally adopted yet, but some families are about to put their application to the court. Prospective adopters and social workers were unclear about what support would be available post-adoption and how they can access it. Post-adoption support has not been adequately planned for and resourced and, as there are some families ready to adopt, this is of concern.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Prospective adopters have an understanding about the short-term impact that past abuse and neglect have had on their child. They have learned about this through their preparation, assessment and the post-adoption support. For example, one set of adopters learned about how their child's developmental delay was a direct result of past trauma and are working successfully to help the child to deal with its effects.

However, not all prospective adopters had an awareness of the long-lasting effects which the combination of being adopted and experiencing past abuse and neglect can have on a child. For example, they did not know about the potential for abused children to be vulnerable to exploitation, depression and anxiety, substance misuse, self-harm and developing eating problems in their teenage years.

There have been no safeguarding issues or significant events since the last inspection. Staff were clear about their duty to report any concerns and how they should do this. They were also clear about the roles and responsibilities of the safeguarding departments in the local authority. There is no clarity about who is the designated safeguarding officer for the agency.

The arrangements for recruiting staff are not thorough. Two references had not been obtained for some staff and not all staff had references from a current employer; there was no evidence that references had been verified; gaps in employment history for one applicant had not been checked out; and there was no record of one applicant's employment history and no check on her identity. Additionally, the agency had not carried out its own police checks but had relied on checks carried out by other organisations. Where applicants had signed up to the update checking service, this had not been checked to make sure that there were no issues of concern since the certificate's issue. This poor practice does not ensure that people working for the agency are all suitable to do so.

The effectiveness of leaders and manager: requires improvement to be good

While there have been positive developments in the agency since the last inspection, these are at an early stage and need to be built upon and embedded.

A responsible individual and a new manager have been appointed, both of whom are social work qualified. The manager is experienced in adoption work, but she does not have a management qualification. The manager and responsible individual have good working relationships with each other and the directors. It is clear that the management team and directors are passionate about and committed to developing a high-quality service to children and their families.

Since the last inspection, there have been improvements in the amount of time allocated to the manager to manage the agency. However, the time designated to the responsible individual, who is also the agency decision maker, to undertake the required management and leadership responsibilities is limited. As a result, the manager has been

undertaking elements of the role of the responsible individual.

Most of the previous requirements and recommendations have been met, and this has led to improvements in the agency's leadership and management. Issues that have not been met include: developing the arrangements for monitoring; developing a training plan for staff; making improvements in staff recruitment practice; and ensuring that case records are complete.

The arrangements for monitoring and developing the service are fragmented. Case files have not been audited, and feedback from service users has been requested by the workers working with them but has not been analysed or used to develop the agency. There has been no feedback sought from children in placement. The manager does monitor children's progress. She has a good understanding of ongoing issues for children, but her monitoring is not carried out in a systematic way so that any patterns and trends are identified and can be addressed. There are no systems to formally report to the provider on a six-monthly basis.

The arrangements for the development of the agency are disorganised. While there are informal lunch meetings between the management team and directors, there are no formal recorded management meetings to illustrate that strategic development is effectively planned and organised. A plan for development for the coming year was produced by the manager and responsible individual in June 2017. This mainly relates to issues about practice. There is no involvement, or plans to be involved, in national development projects such as regionalisation.

There are improvements in the levels of staffing to meet the demands of the work. One new social worker was appointed in April 2017 and contracted workers are used to carry out the preparation, assessments and support work. This model has its benefits. For example, the agency can use people for specific pieces of work in line with their specialisms. However, it also detracts from a clear sense of a team and means that social workers work in isolation. Team meetings that are held are not attended by contract workers, and this means that there is no arena for workers to share practice, discuss safeguarding issues or get to know each other. Staff do feel supported by the manager. They report that they have regular supervision sessions. There is no training plan and no arrangements for evaluating if the training that contracted workers have done is of a good quality.

Professional relationships are being developed with other agencies and professionals. Challenge to other agencies has not always been made in a timely way, for example when services identified on adoption support plans or important paperwork about children have not been forthcoming. These matters have not been sufficiently escalated to ensure that the services are provided in a timely way and information is received.

The panel makes well-considered recommendations about the suitability of applicants to adopt. The panel has not provided a quality assurance report to the agency to inform the manager's monitoring. Agency decision-making is undertaken in a timely way and people are informed in writing of the decision.

Case records are incomplete and would not provide an adopter or child requesting access to their records with a full account of the decision-making processes or the agency's work with them. The case recording policy does not include details about what should be on each file. Records are held securely and confidentiality is carefully maintained.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the voluntary adoption agency knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003, the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005, any other relevant legislation, and the national minimum standards.

Voluntary adoption agency details

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