

# Father Hudson's (Adoption Support Agency)

Father Hudson's Society

St George's House, Gerards Way, Coleshill, Birmingham B46 3FG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this adoption support agency

The adoption support agency, known as the Origins Service, is part of Father Hudson's Society. The adoption support services include access to records held by the agency and intermediary services for adopted adults and members of their birth family. The Origins Service also provides a service to adults affected by child migration and residential childcare, but this does not come under the remit of this inspection.

Although the agency is registered to provide adoption support services for children, it does this through a service level agreement with Adoption Focus. This is in relation to the adoptive families who were approved by Father Hudson's Society when it operated as a voluntary adoption agency. Adoption Focus is a voluntary adoption agency which was formerly provided by Father Hudson's Society under a different name until it became a separate entity in 2009.

The manager undertakes all the work in relation to adoption support, assisted by a part-time administrative member of staff. In the year April 2016 to March 2017, 125 people received a service, 82 of whom were adult adoptees.

**Inspection dates:** 25 to 27 July 2017

**Overall experience and progress of service users, taking into account:** **outstanding**

How well children, young people and adults are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The adoption support agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the adoption support agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for service users.

**Date of last inspection:** 28 January 2014

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This adoption support agency is outstanding because:

- Adopted adults and their birth families benefit from exceptionally high quality adoption support.
- The manager provides support that is highly individual and conducted in an extremely sensitive manner. This enables adopted adults to understand fully the circumstances around their adoption.
- The relationships between the manager, adoptees and birth family members are excellent. These help to provide adopted adults and birth families with a strong foundation to allow them to continue to develop their relationships.
- The manager provides adopted adults and their birth families with a comprehensive understanding of their background and personal history in a well-organised and bound portfolio.
- The manager is a highly experienced, inspirational and committed leader.
- Fellow professionals recognise the manager as a leader in her area of expertise and say she is exceptional. She has an excellent understanding of birth records counselling and intermediary work.
- Research underpins the work of the agency and it is frequently shared with social workers, adoptees and their birth families.
- The manager knows and understands the agency's strengths well. She continually drives improvement by identifying strategies to address any areas for development.

The adoption support agency's areas for development:

- Ensure that the manager receives regular professional supervision from an appropriately qualified person.

## **What does the adoption support agency need to do to improve?**

### **Recommendations**

- Staff have access to support and advice and are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. (National Minimum Standards 24.4)

This refers to the manager of the agency.

### **Inspection judgements**

#### **Overall experiences and progress of service users: outstanding**

Adopted adults and their birth families benefit from exceptionally high quality adoption support. This support consists of strong and effective access to birth records counselling and intermediary work. The work is of a highly individual nature and it has a positive impact on those receiving a service. One birth parent stated, 'Thank you again for your help and involvement in reuniting me with my son. I can't explain the feeling of happiness I am now experiencing. I feel whole at last.' A social worker commented, 'I have referred a couple of adoptees for intermediary work after seeing them for birth records counselling. The feedback has been that [the manager] is highly knowledgeable, professional and approachable. Adoptees have found her work invaluable.'

Adopted adults and their birth families gain a comprehensive understanding of their background and personal history. The manager compiles a well-organised and bound portfolio for service users. This exceptional practice contains detailed information about their history and includes many original documents. One social worker from Australia commented, 'The report you sent for [name of person] is the best presented I have ever received from the UK. It was really well done and feels both respectful and lovely that you have taken the time to present the information in this way and to include original letters filed so carefully.'

The manager enables adopted adults to understand the circumstances around their adoption in a highly sensitive manner. This helps them to have a full understanding of the information they receive and the possible implications of contacting their birth relatives. As a result, adopted adults are able to make informed decisions about tracing and contacting their relatives. Adopted adults and birth families feel that the intermediary work conducted by the manager provides them with a strong foundation to allow them to continue to develop their relationships.

The relationships between the manager, adoptees and birth family members are excellent. All those who use the service feel that it is easily accessible and say that

the manager is extremely prompt in responding to their enquiries. All those who use the agency are consistent in their praise about the service they receive. Comments have included 'Absolutely superb service' and 'Excellent service'. One adoptee stated, 'The service from the agency has been fantastic. Very sensitively and intelligently handled. I was impressed by the whole experience and the outcome has been wonderful.'

### **How well children, young people and adults are helped and protected: good**

The agency does not work with children. A variety of clear and detailed safeguarding policies and procedures inform good practice and help to protect vulnerable adults from harm. The manager and administrator have access to relevant and detailed safeguarding guidance that includes historical abuse, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. This informs their practice and helps to reduce the risk of harm.

Prior to starting intermediary work with adoptees, the manager conducts risk assessments. This enables the manager to take into account factors that may affect individuals receiving a service, such as the health of birth relatives. This ensures that all work is carried out safely and helps adults using the service to feel safe.

The manager has a very good awareness of current safeguarding issues that are relevant to her work with adoptees and their birth families. She quickly recognises where they may be a concern and will develop her knowledge if required. For example, the manager updated her knowledge by conducting research into radicalisation following a concern raised by an adoptee.

There have been no safeguarding concerns or complaints about the work carried out by the agency. Adopted adults and their families are fully aware of how to make a complaint. A complaints information leaflet is made available to them at the start of their involvement with the agency alongside information leaflets.

The organisation has strong recruitment procedures in place. No new staff have been recruited from outside of the organisation since the last inspection. Internal staff transferring into the agency undergo a thorough interview process. This ensures that all those working with vulnerable service users are suitable and have the appropriate skills to do so.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The manager is a highly experienced, inspirational and committed leader. She has an excellent understanding of birth records counselling and intermediary work, which has been gained through extensive work in this field for over 20 years. She is a leader in her area of expertise and is recognised as exceptional by fellow professionals. One social worker stated, 'She is extremely competent and this is her area of expertise. We look to her for advice. She is generous in her time and knowledge and she keeps abreast of recent events.'

The manager has a particularly strong understanding of the issues regarding Irish birth mothers. She has produced a briefing note for another adoption agency in Dublin to assist it to participate in the government committee legislative scrutiny of the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2015, which went on to be published in 2016. She has also obtained clarification from the Irish passport office about the requirements needed for UK born adoptees of Irish birth parents when applying for Irish passports. It is clear that the manager has extremely high expectations for those to whom she provides a service. She ensures that adoptees and birth families receive excellent support and advice.

Research underpins the work of the agency. The manager is keen to seize all opportunities to continue to develop her practice. Since the last inspection, she has undertaken a number of specialist courses to develop her understanding and practice in the delivery of adoption support services. The manager is an active participant in meetings of birth records professionals. She has shared case studies with her colleagues about working with adoptees who have Downs Syndrome, and also shared practice developments from training courses. The manager uses research and learning from her own practice to inform the delivery of the service. Outcomes from research are frequently shared with adopted adults and their families to support their understanding of adoption.

The manager and trustees clearly recognise the ongoing importance and needs of children and young people. Although the agency no longer provides a direct service to under 18-year-olds and their families, they have developed a service level agreement with another voluntary adoption agency to provide this support. This ensures that children and young people, who were adopted through the agency, can continue to receive post adoption support when it is needed.

The agency is meeting its stated aims and objectives as defined in the statement of purpose. The statement of purpose is easily accessible to service users on the organisation's website. It describes the range of services undertaken both by the adoption support agency and by the work contracted for children and their families. The manager has developed the website following feedback from service users to allow payments to be made through an online payment system. She has also developed the website to make it clear to people living in Ireland, and whose adoption was arranged in the UK, that they can access the service.

Case records are extremely well organised and clearly show the work undertaken. They evidence reflective practice and meticulously detail how the agency responds to service users with diverse needs. For example, when a vulnerable adult was part of the intermediary process, the manager checked with the local authority adult services to see if a support worker was involved. The manager also, before making contact with an adult adoptee who has Downs Syndrome, sought advice from another professional with experience of working with adults who have learning disabilities.

The manager knows and understands the agency's strengths and areas for

improvement exceptionally well. She continually drives improvement by identifying strategies to address any areas for development. For example, she recently identified and sought out peer support to help her develop her skills working with young adult adoptees. There are strong and timely systems of reporting the activities of the agency to the board of trustees through quarterly reports. This ensures clear governance and independent monitoring of birth records counselling and intermediary work.

The manager receives regular good quality supervision and appraisal from a senior manager in the organisation. However, as the senior manager is not social work qualified, the manager accesses peer and professional support when she feels she requires it. This has not been formalised to ensure that the manager has appropriate professional supervision at all times. This has had no impact on the quality of the service provided.

## **Information about this inspection**

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

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, using the 'Social care common inspection framework', to assess the effectiveness of the adoption support agency, how it meets the core functions as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005 and the national minimum standards.

## **Adoption support agency details**

**Unique reference number:** SC397224

**Registered provider:** Father Hudson's Society

**Registered provider address:** St George's House, Gerards Way, Coleshill,  
Birmingham B46 3FG

**Responsible individual:** Mr Andrew Quinn

**Registered manager:** Mrs Josephine Clemons

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### **Inspectors**

Sue Young, social care inspector (lead)  
Anne Daly, social care inspector



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