

# Adoption Matters

14 Liverpool Road, Chester CH2 1AE  
Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this voluntary adoption agency**

The agency has been established since April 2007, in its current model, following a merger with another voluntary adoption service with premises in Blackburn. Prior to the merger, both agencies had been established for many years.

The agency undertakes all required work in respect of the recruitment, preparation, assessment and approval of adopters, both domestic and inter-country, and operates from five sites: Chester, Blackburn, Hale, Salford and Warrington. The agency also undertakes a range of adoption support services, including birth records counselling and intermediary work. The agency works collaboratively with another voluntary adoption agency to provide some of these services, in particular regarding adoption support services, the bespoke family finding service and concurrent care planning.

**Date of previous inspection:** 17 October 2017

**Inspection date:** 18 October 2018

### **This monitoring visit**

This visit was undertaken to address specific concerns that have been notified to Ofsted since the agency's last inspection a year ago. These concerns relate to the agency's handling of complaints made by service users. In addition, at the agency's last inspection a recommendation was made relating to the recording of complaints. At this monitoring visit, inspectors were able to explore complaints received by the agency and the action taken.

Since the last inspection, the agency has revised its complaints procedure and appointed a 'Designated Lead (Complaints)' (DLC). This individual is the business development manager for the agency. The responsibility for complaints is an additional duty, for which she has received no additional training. She has worked hard to improve systems for the tracking of complaints and the monitoring of timescales. This is held electronically, so that it is easily accessible to those who need it. However, the timescales for each stage of the complaints procedure do not comply with regulatory requirements. The procedure does refer complainants to

Ofsted, if they remain dissatisfied with the agency's response, but does not include the contact details for Ofsted, which are required. This would make it easier for individuals who are considering this course of action.

The new system ensures that the DLC acknowledges an individual's complaint and undertakes an investigation into the concerns. This involves liaison with those involved within the agency. However, records do not contain details of an investigation plan or a record of the investigation itself. This makes it difficult to see who has been involved and how some conclusions have been reached.

Complainants receive an outcome letter on conclusion of the investigation. This indicates whether each area of their complaint has been upheld. This also includes details of the action the agency has already taken, or plans to take, to put things right. However, complainants are not always advised of the next course of action available to them if they remain dissatisfied. Furthermore, details of the complaint do not always form part of the individual's case record. Staff are also unclear about who has responsibility for taking some matters forward.

The agency has a simplified complaints leaflet that is easily accessible on the agency's website. However, the timescales for each stage of the process do not accurately reflect those in the full complaints procedure. Although complainants can request a full copy of the latter, this is confusing.

In conclusion, the agency has made some positive changes since the last inspection. However, further adjustments to the agency's complaints procedure and consistency of practice would help ensure that those who feel the need to complain can be confident about the process and its objectives. Two requirements are made at this monitoring visit to ensure that timely action is taken to address these issues.

## 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.

Requirements	Due date
<p>The copy of the complaints procedure supplied under paragraph (3) shall include the name, address and telephone number of the registration authority. (The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003, Regulation 11(4))</p>	10/12/2018
<p>The registered provider and the manager shall ensure that any complaint made under the complaints procedure is fully investigated. The registered provider and the manager shall, so far as is reasonably practicable, within a period of 28 days beginning on the date on which the complaint is received by the agency, inform the complainant of the outcome of the investigation and the action (if any) that is to be taken in consequence. The registered provider and the manager shall ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, including details of the investigation made, the outcome and any action taken in consequence, and for that record to be retained for at least 3 years from the date that it is made. (The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003, Regulation 12(1)(2)(3))</p>	10/12/2018

### Recommendations

- Ensure that there is a good-quality learning and development programme which includes induction, post-qualifying and in-service training, that staff are supported to undertake. The programme equips them with the skills required

to meet the needs of children and service users. (National minimum standards 23.1)

In particular, that the designated lead for complaints undertakes training pertinent to this role.

## **Information about this inspection**

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the voluntary adoption agency since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000

## **Voluntary adoption agency details**

**Unique reference number:** SC048349

**Registered provider:** Adoption Matters

**Registered provider address:** Adoption Matters, 14 Liverpool Road, Chester CH2 1AE

**Responsible individual:** Norman Goodwin

## **Inspectors**

Mandy Williams, social care inspector

Christine Taylor, Her Majesty's Inspector



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