

Adopters for Adoption

Adopters for Adoption Limited

Senate House, Saxon Business Park, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove,
Worcestershire B60 4AD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this voluntary adoption agency

This voluntary adoption agency was registered with Ofsted in March 2014. It recruits, prepares, trains, assesses and approves adopters to provide homes for children, from a range of local authorities, who need new families. The agency operates across England.

The adoption agency approves adopters for domestic adoption. It also provides adoption support to the adopters that it approves, their children and other adoptive families requesting support.

In the year to date, the adoption agency approved 15 adoptive families and placed 28 children with adoptive families. There were 34 families waiting for a suitable match with a child at the time of the inspection.

The manager has been in post since September 2018. She is appropriately experienced and qualified.

Inspection dates: 20 to 24 May 2024

Overall experiences and progress of service users, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The voluntary adoption agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 6 December 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of service users: good

This adoption agency's work positively impacts the lives of children and their adoptive families.

The adoption agency is inclusive and open to applications from a broad range of individuals. The agency manager and staff are responsive and considerate in their approach to people enquiring about adoption. Applicants experience acceptance from their first contact. This means that people who may have previously ruled themselves out of adoption have an opportunity to explore the possibilities.

Independent social workers, principal social workers and team managers undertake assessments. Assessments are considered and evidence good attention to an applicant's background and motivation to care for children, their experience, their understanding of loss and trauma, and the support networks available to them. Prospective adopters and adopters build positive relationships with their linked social worker who supports them well from assessment through to matching and the making of the adoption order. Adopters told inspectors that the assessment process was thorough but respectful, leaving them well prepared for their new roles.

Adopters attend training that develops their knowledge, confidence and capacity to meet the developing needs of their children. As a result, adopters feel empowered to parent. This means that children benefit from living with families that understand the impact of their previous life experiences. One adopter said:

'It is very clear to us that this agency knows what they are doing and that ultimately, they are seeking the best outcomes for children. During the several stages of training we have been on, they have helped us so much. We have learned what our future adopted children will need, how to best support them and how to make sure they are heard.'

Overall, prospective adopters and adopters are positive about their experiences with the adoption agency. Adopter views are routinely sought, gathered and analysed. In addition to sending regular feedback forms, the agency manager reminds adopters and independent social workers in every newsletter how they can raise any concerns. Learning from feedback is discussed regularly in team meetings, management meetings, supervision and consultations. Key action points are added to the service improvement plan that is monitored by the board. One adopter said:

'I have had a very positive experience with this organisation and would just like to say how wonderfully kind and caring everyone in the organisation is. The adoption process is a long and challenging one but all those who work with this agency have been very professional, with high standards but warm and caring. Stage 1 and 2 training were very beneficial and they were so

nurturing during my panel experience. High expectations and professionalism also describe the organisation.'

Considered attention is given to the matching process. The agency works in close partnership with the adoptive family and professionals to ensure that they can meet the needs of the children. The senior leadership team has recently strengthened this practice with clearer evidence of early consideration of risks and any gaps. Planning to address these matters ensures no unnecessary delay in planning for children's permanence. Any additional actions or training needs identified to further support the children or adoptive family are addressed in a timely manner.

Children experience thoughtful planned moves into their new homes. They build trusted and secure attachments. Staff are extremely flexible and responsive to children's individual and complex needs. They support adoptive families to ensure that their children's needs are met by working in close partnership with other professionals.

The agency ensures that all the children's health needs are prioritised and consistently met. This includes children with complex health needs and those who require regular access to specialist health services. Adoptive parents work in close partnership with health professionals to ensure that the children's health plans are followed and that all possible actions are taken to give children excellent care to meet their specific needs.

The agency ensures that adoptive families understand the importance of education and learning. For some children, this means being supported through assessments to help them access specialist support and services.

Staff and adoptive families are proud of their children's achievements. Their achievements are acknowledged in staff meetings, agency events and celebration days.

Managers ensure that children and adoptive parents have access to good-quality post-adoption support services. This support is carefully tailored to the needs of the child and the family. From the outset, early discussion with children, adoptive parents, social workers and schools prevents unnecessary delay. This excellent early communication ensures that identified interventions are right for the child and their family. This helps children and their adoptive parents to understand and navigate the impact of adoption on their families.

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

Everyone in the agency clearly understands their role and responsibilities. This is supported through staff having access to regularly reviewed policies, procedures and informative training.

The manager and senior leadership team understand their safeguarding responsibilities and have systems in place that enable them to provide good management oversight. This ensures that children's safety is prioritised and that any emerging concerns are quickly identified and reported to statutory agencies.

All staff have an excellent understanding of how the children's previous experiences of trauma and abuse affect their behaviour. Staff support parents in developing an understanding of how their child's early life experiences have affected their emotional well-being and behaviour. Parents are helped to develop the strategies needed to support their child to form attachments and to improve their overall emotional well-being and behaviour.

The manager and staff ensure that the children and their families are supported in times of crisis. Adoptive parents and children have access to their independent social worker and their line manager through calls, texts, emails and visits. They can also access the agency's adoption support therapist.

The voice of the children and their families is apparent at all stages of the adoption process. Clear consultation with children and families helps managers to understand the impact of the agency. The manager and staff continue to develop this element of the agency by introducing further consultation tools and games for children and through line manager 'touch base' phone calls to prospective adopters and adopters throughout the adoption journey. This ensures that information is continuously gathered about the children's and adopters' experiences. This feedback is then used to inform future service development.

Children and adults know how to complain. The numbers of complaints are low and are far outweighed by compliments. Complaints or concerns are resolved promptly. Learning is identified and used to improve the organisation.

The recruitment process for adopters, staff, contracted staff and panel ensures that only suitable people are recruited. This helps to ensure that children are not placed at risk through contact with unsuitable adults.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager and senior leadership team have close day-to-day oversight of the agency in their respective roles as agency manager, assessment managers, support managers and panel adviser. This gives them a clear understanding of the agency and its activities. Internal and external auditing and reporting are well used to support the agency's development. Audits inform a detailed service improvement plan that is regularly reviewed. This means that the senior leadership team, the chief executive officer and the board are aware of emerging patterns and trends and are best placed to respond to them.

The senior leadership team is reflective and uses information about patterns and trends to identify areas of success as well as areas for development. The service

improvement plan is reviewed monthly, and reports are presented to the board until actions are completed. Through this work, senior leaders identified an increase in disruptions in 2023. Prompt and thorough action was taken internally and with partner agencies to understand the reasons for each disruption and the actions needed to reduce adoptive placements ending prematurely. The initial indications are that this has had a positive impact on reducing disruptions in 2024.

Managers and staff are engaged with the wider adoption sector and this ensures good practice is shared and disseminated. The manager is innovative and creative in her drive to develop this good-quality adoption agency. Her skills in change management and service development are a key strength. She leads an enthusiastic and aspirational staff team who are fully committed to the journey. In combination, this has helped the agency to recognise the growing need for adoption support and to restructure the service to provide for this need.

The agency is well resourced with a permanent staff team and contracted independent social workers. The senior leadership team recognises that the support of staff and the independent social workers is fundamental to the agency's success. Everything, from the work environment to the planning and supervision of assessment and support of adoptive families, has a strong focus on the well-being of staff as well as consistent support to adoptive families.

Training and development are high priorities for the agency. Staff and independent social workers are well qualified in their field and managers are supportive of mandatory and individual development opportunities. Staff benefit from induction, regular supervision and appraisal, and the opportunity to attend team meetings. Independent social workers are engaged in case consultations and attend regular surgeries. Independent social workers continue to receive a comprehensive induction developed to focus on assessment and support separately. This ensures all staff have constant opportunities to review and reflect on their practice.

Managers and staff recognise the importance of partnership working. Key partners, including commissioners, social workers and adoptive parents, are positive about the agency and identify consistent and enduring relationships, proactive responses and open and regular communication as key strengths. The agency continues to develop professional partnership practice. For example, an escalation policy has been introduced to help appropriately challenge partner agencies when action is not taken or documents are not provided.

Panel membership is diverse and members are knowledgeable in the field of adoption. They receive regular training, support and appraisal. This assists them to be competent and effective panel members. Considered scrutiny by the panel ensures good oversight of the quality of assessments with clear reasons for the recommendations made. Attendance at joint training sessions and meetings involving the agency manager, the panel chair, the panel adviser and the agency decision-maker ensure the ongoing review and development of the practice and function of the panel.

The agency's decision-making demonstrates clear reflection and consideration of all elements of the application and approval process of adopters. Good succession planning ensures that a comprehensive induction and handover is under way for the new agency decision-maker.

Case files are kept electronically and audits are undertaken regularly. There is no naming protocol and therefore some documents are not easily found. This hinders managers as they lose time locating information that could be used to consider the quality of the record. Some records are detailed, but in other instances they do not mirror the good practice described by staff and adoptive families. The agency manager is in the process of developing and strengthening recording.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that 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, and on the child's and prospective adopters' case records. ('Adoption: national minimum standards', page 78, paragraph 27.1)
- The registered person should ensure that the agency takes action to address any issues of concern that they identify or which is raised with them. This specifically relates to the leadership team continuing to take appropriate actions from lessons learned as a result of disruptions. ('Adoption: national minimum standards', page 73, paragraph 25.7)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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

Unique reference number: SC476482

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