

— D F W Adoption

—
Inspection report for Voluntary Adoption Agency

Unique reference number	SC049020
Inspection date	26/05/2010
Inspector	Sean White
Type of inspection	Key

Setting address	D F W Adoption, Agriculture House, Stonebridge, DURHAM, DH1 3RY
Telephone number	0191 386 3719
Email	office@dfwadoption.plus.com
Registered person	D F W Adoption
Registered manager	Margaret Bell
Responsible individual	Stuart Bain
Date of last inspection	17/07/2007

© Crown copyright 2010

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

D F W Adoption (DWF) is a voluntary adoption agency, which has operated in the Diocese of Durham since 1907.

The agency offers a comprehensive range of services in relation to current and past adoptions. This includes the recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective adopters, adoption support, training and consultancy.

The agency is registered as a voluntary adoption agency, offering intermediary services under Section 3 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and operates under the terms of the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005.

The agency works exclusively in the field of adoption and provides a wide range of services in relation to current and past adoptions.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This is an agency that provides services of an incredibly high standard. Its approach to the recruitment of adopters is based on a total commitment to ensuring that children's futures and well-being are safe and outcomes positive. It does this through a robust and thorough approach at all levels, supported by an analytical and rigorous panel that enhances the operational rigour of the managers and workers.

The operational model that service users enjoy is sensitive, inclusive and addresses their individual needs in a manner that identifies their particular circumstances, which includes their heritage, lifestyles, orientations and disabilities. This is evident in all aspects of the service's functions.

It provides bespoke support packages to deal with families' challenges, works collaboratively with other agencies to enable placements to succeed and analyses particular circumstances from an informed standpoint. This is achieved through the agency's commitment and motivation to develop services based on researching current thinking and weaving theoretical knowledge into practice.

The service is managed to a very high standard, efficiently organised and administered, and operationally and strategically focused on best outcomes for children. It sets standards for contemporaries to emulate.

Improvements since the last inspection

The agency has addressed all the matters raised at the last inspection. There is much improved monitoring of records, policies are up to date and decision making is clearly recorded.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

This is an agency that places the safety and well-being of children at the forefront of its activities.

There is a clear and committed approach to recruiting families that are able to provide adoptive homes for children with diverse, complex backgrounds and circumstances. Families are actively recruited from all sectors of the community; the aim being to meet the wide range of needs of children placed for adoption nationally. There is a particularly strong motivation to work with people from all walks of life if they are able to fulfil the expectations of the agency in respect of parenting capacity and ability to promote and protect children's well-being.

The agency has a determinedly rigorous approach to the selection, preparation and assessment of prospective adopters. It ensures that all applicants have a fully informed introduction to the process and undertakes assessments in an open, inclusive yet detailed way which is thorough, sensitive and focused. There is a particularly clear understanding and demonstrably knowledgeable aspect of the theoretical underpinnings of adoption. This enables the agency to bring a rounded and well-researched aspect to its work. The outcome being that only those applicants that are able to demonstrate their suitability to provide adoptive homes for children with specific needs are brought before the adoption panel.

A suitably constituted and well-managed adoption panel brings further rigour to the process and demonstrates an analytical and thoughtful approach to its responsibilities. Applications are subject to careful scrutiny and recommendations are made only after the members have satisfied themselves that the applicants have demonstrated their suitability. It has a strong approach to quality management and reports are consistently, demonstrably of a high standard in both content and presentation.

The panel business is very efficiently managed and administered. Minutes are of a consistently high standard, which provides the agency decision maker with concise, yet well crafted, detailed information to reach an informed judgement on suitability.

Decisions are made in a timely way.

The staff recruitment practices are thorough and ensure that only the most suitable workers and managers are employed.

— The manager and staff demonstrate an impressive knowledge and understanding of adoption and its benefits for the well-being of children. Practice, in all areas of the agency's duties and responsibilities, is of an outstanding standard that is clearly respected and appreciated by service users and other agencies. There is a commitment to keeping abreast of current and new thinking, and the importance of academic research is incorporated into the agency's operations and responsibilities. This promotes the continued raising of standards in practice and thinking, which further benefits the positive outcomes the agency strives for.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The commitment to the provision of support to adoptive families and the level of input adopters and children receive is impressive. It offers a lifetime commitment to supporting its families, which is viewed as invaluable by service users. There is a clear focus that any support provided is for the benefit of the child(ren) and his or her continued safety and well-being.

There is a deep, collective understanding of the challenges of adopting children with complex needs and the issues that can arise in families. Knowledge and skills are continually developed and enhanced by research and contemporary thinking in complex areas such as attachment and post-adoption depression.

Staff engage sensitively and purposefully with families and enable them to focus on the challenges they face and how they might be overcome. The agency works closely with colleagues from placing authorities to provide as seamless a service as possible and develops partnership arrangements to ensure families know and understand the support framework.

Workers are responsive to needs and react to crises promptly and sensitively. This is viewed as enormously supportive by service users who demonstrate gratitude and relief at the efforts made by workers.

The agency is clear about the range of specialist services it can call upon to assist with particular issues and is tireless and tenacious in pursuing them for the benefit of families. There is a well-qualified medical advisor, members of the adoption panel bring specialist knowledge, including diversity, disability and special needs education and it has access to the services of a legal advisor, who brings added value in respect of specific knowledge of different cultural groups.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

As a voluntary agency, the service does not carry statutory responsibility for children's planning or care proceedings and is not, therefore, involved in the encouragement of parents to be involved in their children's adoption plans.

It plays a key part, nevertheless, in establishing the importance of children's backgrounds in the adoption process and has developed and managed groundbreaking and innovative practice in respect of maintaining and celebrating children's histories. This demonstrates the agency's commitment to adopted children and the importance of carefully managed contact and life story for their futures. This is an outstanding motivation, carefully underpinned by research and development, that clearly outlines the agency's focus on improving practice and innovation in all of its activities.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The agency operates within the framework of its Statement of Purpose; this is underpinned and informed by a comprehensive range of policies, procedures and protocols that reflect its statement, and which determine practice.

The materials produced by the agency are of a consistently high standard. This includes information for adopters, the website and all other information relating to the agency's functions.

The service is managed, at all levels, to an impressively high standard. Everyone involved in the agency's operations are fully informed, well supported and contribute effectively to the overall activity of the service's responsibilities.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is a total commitment to the valuing of difference woven into all of the service's operations and a philosophical and ethical model of practice underscores a fully informed approach to anti-discrimination. All members of the community are welcomed by the agency and all individual needs are addressed as determined by people's circumstances, be they heritage, disability or orientation/lifestyle.

The service operates in a controlled way with managers being clear about operational and strategic direction. It is efficient organisationally and there is clarity

in the way that workers are expected to undertake their duties and responsibilities. Managers are fully supported and encouraged by a committed and purposeful executive which monitors the agency's activities closely.

It is also, however, managed in a way that encourages and enables innovative practice and individuality. Workers have freedom to explore new ideas, disseminate research and examine its benefits to the agency; this promotes and encourages new thinking, collaborative working and focuses on better outcomes for service users. The encouragement of training, professional development, relationships with universities and academic analysis imbues the agency with an impressive range of ideas that are threaded into practice. Service users benefit from this well-managed approach to moulding theory and practice into a bespoke model of service provision.

The administration of the agency is particularly efficient. Administrators have clear, individual responsibilities, yet have the skills and knowledge to cover each other's absences where necessary. Processes are clear and well managed, record keeping is of a high order, case and staff files contain all required information and are well maintained; security is good. The premises are accessible, provide a comfortable working environment and resources have improved considerably in recent times improving further the service's efficiency.

Financial matters are similarly well managed and efficient. There is very close scrutiny of all financial processes by both workers and the executive and there are sufficient reserves to ensure the agency's viability.