

Slough Adoption Service

Slough Children's Services Trust Limited (09487106)

09487106 - Incorporated on 12 March 2015, Ground Floor West, St Martin's Place,
51 Bath Rd, Slough SL1 3UF

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this voluntary adoption agency

This voluntary adoption agency is managed by Slough Children's Services Trust Limited. It is a not-for-profit organisation. It currently has no branches.

It was registered as a voluntary adoption agency by Ofsted on 30 September 2015. It is managed by two managers under a job share arrangement. They were registered to manage the agency in September 2015.

The agency recruits, prepares, assesses and approves adoptive families. Adoptive families approved by it are also used by other local authorities for their children waiting for an adoptive placement.

The agency provides support to families and to adopted adults and birth parents affected by adoption. It also manages the arrangements for children to have post-adoption contact with their birth families.

Between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018, 12 children were placed with 10 Slough approved adopters. The agency decision maker approved 17 adopter applications during this period and as at 30 October 2018, three approved adopters were waiting for a match with a child.

Inspection dates: 29 October to 2 November 2018

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

How well children, young people and adults are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 23 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This voluntary adoption agency is good because:

- Children flourish.
- Children's learning is supported very well.
- Children's health needs, including more complex ones, are catered for effectively.
- Children are safe, and their well-being is held at the centre of the work.
- The preparation, assessment and approval of adopters are of a good quality.
- The thorough arrangements for finding and matching parents with children make sure that well-considered matches are made.
- The support provided to children and adoptive families helps to make sure that families overcome any difficulties that they experience.
- Leadership and management arrangements are fully embedded, and leaders and managers have made improvements in many aspects of the work.
- There continue to be strong working relationships with other professionals and agencies.
- Staff are enthusiastic about their work and children are their priority.

The voluntary adoption agency's areas for development:

- The arrangements for vetting people working for the agency are not evidenced as having been in line with regulations and standards in every case.
- Not all prospective adopters have provided details of their full employment histories.
- There are inaccuracies in some record-keeping.

Areas of improvement

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meet(s) the Care Standards Act 2000, the 'Voluntary adoption agencies and the adoption agencies (miscellaneous amendments) regulations', 2003, the 'Adoption agencies regulations', 2005 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, in relation to any branch, the branch manager, shall not—</p> <p>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. For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of an agency unless—</p> <p>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. ('Voluntary adoption agencies (miscellaneous amendments) regulations', 2003, Regulation 14 (1)(2)(3))</p>	02/01/2019
<p>The adoption agency must obtain the information about the prospective adopter which is specified in Part 3 of Schedule 4 (The Adoption Agencies Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations 2013, Regulation 30 (1) Schedule 4)</p> <p>In particular, ensure that details of the prospective adopter's employment history includes, in addition to the years of employment, the months that they commenced and ceased working for the company.</p>	02/01/2019

Recommendations

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

- Ensure there is an effective system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record-keeping and action is taken when needed. (Adoption: national minimum standards 27.2)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of service users: good

Prospective and current adopters said that they chose to adopt with this agency as they felt welcomed and highly valued from their first contact. Interested parties are provided with good-quality information about all aspects of adoption. This allows people to consider, in an informed way, if adoption is right for them.

Prospective adopters said that they found the preparation courses very informative and that this has helped them to make the decision to continue their journey towards parenting a child from the care system. One prospective adopter said that for them the preparation groups had been a safe learning place and that they were made to feel that no question was a silly one.

Overall, the quality of assessments is good. Assessments are analytical and provide a good view about the applicant's strengths and areas for development. Timescales for the approval of adopters are generally good. Any delays are usually purposeful or beyond the control of the agency. There is an inconsistent approach to gaining applicants' employment histories, so this means that gaps may not have been explored.

The arrangements for family finding and matching children with their adoptive family are well considered. Prospective adopters are supported well to find out and to think about the needs of the child they are considering adopting. To support these needs, prospective adopters attend life appreciation days about the child and learn about them, from people who know him or her, first hand. From this work, prospective adopters gain a good understanding about how the child's needs may affect them as a family in the future.

There are good working relationships with children's social workers and foster carers, who support children to move on. This helps to make sure that each child has a good start in their adoptive family.

The learning needs of children, including even the youngest of babies, are very well catered for. The virtual school supports adoptive parents to provide children with early and sustained opportunities to explore and to learn from their world. Children develop a desire to seek out new experiences from which they learn and build upon. Adoptive parents liaise effectively with their child's school, and, where necessary, the agency supports them with this. For one child who has additional needs, work was carried out to ensure that he has the same opportunities in relation to access to nursery education as his peers.

Children's routine and more complex health needs are well met. Prospective adopters and social workers are very good advocates for children and make sure that they get the services, including specialist health support, that they need.

The impact that children's past histories have on their emotional and overall well-being is recognised and understood by the agency and their parents. When necessary, therapeutic and other support work is commissioned, and this helps to begin to minimise the impact of their past. As a result, children's emotional well-being improves, and children begin to

blossom and grow in confidence.

Adoptive parents are aware of the importance of promoting their child's heritage to make sure that they know and understand their roots. One way in which this is achieved is through the well-managed and thought through letterbox contact. Life story work carried out with children also supports them to develop an understanding about their backgrounds. This work is of a high quality and carried out in a timely way.

The support services have been developed since the last inspection. There is now a permanent worker coordinating and delivering these. There is more clarity about the purpose of post-placement social worker visits and of other support. All support work is now reviewed. Successful applications to the adoption support fund have provided several families with good-quality therapeutic support. There is a particularly good range of post-approval training and a range of events and groups for adoptive families. These events enable people to share their experiences and to have fun with each other. Adoptive parents said that they are confident that support is there should they need it. The support services undoubtedly contribute to the very low disruption rate of this agency.

Work with adults is carried out by an experienced and knowledgeable worker and is of a high quality. The work is undertaken sensitively and in a timely way.

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

Children settle well in secure and stable placements with prospective adopters who listen to them. Children build trusting relationships with their adoptive parents and they thrive. From their newly-found, safe and secure base, children begin to explore their world and develop the confidence and skills that they will need to develop into well-adjusted adults.

Adoptive parents understand how their child's past experiences have impacted on their overall well-being. Adoptive parents learn about how these have potentially left children vulnerable and therefore at risk in the future. Good-quality training about these issues makes sure that adopters know how to minimise these and additional risks associated with contemporary living, such as social networking.

Staff training in relation to safeguarding is effective and makes sure that staff understand and know how to deal with risks to children's safety and well-being. While there have been no safeguarding issues since the last inspection, the child-centred approach that social workers have makes sure that children and their safety is at the centre of everything that they do.

Staff recruitment and vetting processes are not as thoroughly undertaken as they should be. For example, while all the staff files sampled showed that checks with the police had been carried out and for most staff two written references had been obtained, not all references had been verified. In one case, checks of a gap in the applicant's employment history had not been clearly documented. Reasons for leaving employment with children or vulnerable adults were not evidenced as having been explored in every case.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The adoption service is managed through a job share arrangement. This arrangement is well embedded and roles and responsibilities are clear.

There is good oversight of the work and monitoring arrangements are effective. The agency uses learning from feedback, including complaints, to develop the service.

Staff report that they feel very well supported by the leadership and management. The staff team is well led and managed. Staff are enthusiastic, competent and confident about their work. This is a cohesive team with shared aspirations for the children and a passion about making sure that children get the best opportunities possible to progress in their lives.

Staff take responsibility for the quality of their own practice and professional development and benefit from the good training and development opportunities available to them.

The panel provides appropriate scrutiny to the work presented to it and makes well-considered recommendations to the agency about the suitability of applicants and the matching of children with prospective adopters. The agency decision maker makes well-considered decisions in a timely way.

The staff have strong working relationships with other professionals and challenge services that are not providing a good service to children and their families.

Some shortfalls remain in the accuracy of record-keeping. These include an incorrect date of birth recorded for one child and incorrect dates relating to events to do with the assessment for an adopter.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have 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 help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families, and adult service users. 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, young people and adults 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

Unique reference number: 1183499

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Inspector(s)

Rosie Dancer, social care inspector (lead)
Ros Chapman, social care inspector



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