

Care service inspection report

Clackmannanshire Adoption Service

Adoption Service

Child Care Services

Lime Tree House

Castle Street

Alloa

FK10 1EX

Telephone: 01259 225000

Inspected by: Lynne Nimmo

Mary Soutar

Type of inspection: Announced

Inspection completed on: 4 August 2011



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Contents

	Page No
Summary	3
1 About the service we inspected	5
2 How we inspected this service	6
3 The inspection	9
4 Other information	19
5 Summary of grades	20
6 Inspection and grading history	20

Service provided by:

Clackmannanshire Council

Service provider number:

SP2003002713

Care service number:

CS2004083967

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Summary

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change after this inspection following other regulatory activity. For example, if we have to take enforcement action to make the service improve, or if we investigate and agree with a complaint someone makes about the service.

We gave the service these grades

Quality of Care and Support	4	Good
Quality of Staffing		N/A
Quality of Management and Leadership	4	Good

What the service does well

Clackmannanshire Council Adoption agency continues to provide a good service to people interested in adopting children. By working effectively with neighbouring councils, they continue to prevent any unnecessary delays for applicants and arranging for them to attend their preparation courses.

What the service could do better

The service needs to try and recruit more adopters.

A new manager, who will have a key role in further developing the adoption agency, is to be appointed.

What the service has done since the last inspection

The service has published their participation strategy. A start has been made on developing policies and procedures that reflect new legislation.

New staff members have joined the team which continues to develop. They work well together by sharing knowledge, experience and supporting each other.

Conclusion

We found that Clackmannanshire Council Adoption is providing a good service, assessing and preparing adopters to meet the needs of children.

Who did this inspection

Lynne Nimmo

Mary Soutar

1 About the service we inspected

Clackmannanshire Council Adoption Service provides an Adoption Agency for children and young people aged from 0 to 16 years, who are assessed as in need of this service and who live or have a connection with Clackmannanshire. The agency is registered to recruit and support adoptive families.

The service was registered on 23 November 2005. Before 1 April 2001 this service was registered with the Care Commission. On this date the new scrutiny body, Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS), took over the work of the Care Commission, including the registration of care services. This means that from 1 April 2011 this service continued its registration under the new body SCSWIS.

The stated aims and objectives of the service are:

- To meet the needs of children who, for a variety of reasons, cannot live with their own families.
- To work in partnership with prospective adopters.

The service is based within Lime Tree House, Castle Street, Alloa FK10 1EX. At present a temporary team manager supports staff three days per week. There are plans in place to appoint a permanent manager.

Based on the findings of this inspection this service has been awarded the following grades:

Quality of Care and Support - Grade 4 - Good

Quality of Staffing - N/A

Quality of Management and Leadership - Grade 4 - Good

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change following other regulatory activity. You can find the most up-to-date grades for this service by visiting our website www.scswis.com or by calling us on 0845 600 9527 or visiting one of our offices.

2 How we inspected this service

The level of inspection we carried out

In this service we carried out a medium intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections where we have assessed the service may need a more intense inspection.

What we did during the inspection

This report was written following an announced inspection that took place between 25 July and 4 August 2011. The inspection was carried out by Inspectors, Lynne Nimmo and Mary Soutar.

As requested by us, the care service sent us an annual return. The service also sent us a self assessment form.

During this inspection we gathered evidence from a variety of sources, including the relevant sections of policies, procedures, records and other documents including:

- Personal plans of people who use the service
- Team meeting minutes
- Panel minutes
- Attendance at a Panel meeting
- Staff training records
- Staff supervision records
- Adopters handbook
- Clackmannanshire Council's website
- Evidence from the service's most recent self assessment

Discussions with various people including:

- The management team
- Supervising Social Workers
- Children's Social Workers

All of the above information was taken into account and used to inform this report.

Grading the service against quality themes and statements

We inspect and grade elements of care that we call 'quality themes'. For example, one of the quality themes we might look at is 'Quality of care and support'. Under each quality theme are 'quality statements' which describe what a service should be doing well for that theme. We grade how the service performs against the quality themes and statements.

Details of what we found are in Section 3: The inspection

Inspection Focus Areas (IFAs)

In any year we may decide on specific aspects of care to focus on during our inspections. These are extra checks we make on top of all the normal ones we make during inspection. We do this to gather information about the quality of these aspects of care on a national basis. Where we have examined an inspection focus area we will clearly identify it under the relevant quality statement.

Fire safety issues

We do not regulate fire safety. Local fire and rescue services are responsible for checking services. However, where significant fire safety issues become apparent, we will alert the relevant fire and rescue services so they may consider what action to take. You can find out more about care services' responsibilities for fire safety at www.firelawscotland.org

What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at our last inspection

The service has taken action on the recommendations made at the last inspection. One is still ongoing.

The annual return

Every year all care services must complete an 'annual return' form to make sure the information we hold is up to date. We also use annual returns to decide how we will inspect the service.

Annual Return Received: Yes - Electronic

Comments on Self Assessment

Every year all care services must complete a 'self assessment' form telling us how their service is performing. We check to make sure this assessment is accurate.

We received a fully completed self assessment document from the service provider. We were satisfied with the way the service provider had completed this and with the relevant information they had given us for each of the headings that we grade them under.

The service provider identified what they thought they did well, some areas for development and any changes they planned

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

It was not possible to gain any children's views at this inspection as they were too young to share their views.

Taking carers' views into account

As no adopters had been approved since the last inspection, it was not possible to gain any views.

3 The inspection

We looked at how the service performs against the following quality themes and statements. Here are the details of what we found.

Quality Theme 1: Quality of Care and Support

Overall grade awarded for this theme: 4 - Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the care and support provided by the service.

Service strengths

As the service had not approved any adoptive families since the last inspection we were not able to have input from that source. However, we determined from information gathered from discussion with staff and managers and examination of documents provided by the service that there are good opportunities for adopters to give their views about the service.

A participation strategy has been developed outlining ways in which adoptive parents can be involved in the service.

Systems are in place which provide adopters with the opportunity to comment at all stages of the process. This includes after the preparation sessions and panel. Clackmannanshire Council arrange access to preparation sessions organised by neighbouring authorities to prevent unnecessary delays for applicants.

From documentation viewed, we were able to clarify that applicants are fully involved in the assessment process.

Where permanency/adoption is deemed to be in children's best interests, the Local Authority endeavours to involve birth parents in the process. Where they choose not to engage staff work with other family members to gather information about children that will enable them to identify adopters who can meet their individual needs.

Adoptive and foster families work very well together to develop plans for introductions and the move to their new family. Adoptive parents continue to be involved in ongoing discussions about continued contact with foster families as necessary for children.

Foster Carers provide adoptive parents with very useful and relevant information that helps them get to know children. They also receive information from other professionals involved with the child both prior to and following placement.

Areas for improvement

The agency still has to put together an adopters handbook and had plans to involve people who had been approved.

Grade awarded for this statement: 4 - Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 3

We ensure that service user's health and wellbeing needs are met.

Service strengths

As stated in Quality Statement 1, theme 1 the service has not approved any adopters since the last inspection. Therefore, from the information provided we were not able to clarify current practice for some parts of the process.

The system in place ensures that prospective adopters are subject to a thorough assessment with regard to their suitability as adopters. This includes medical checks, references and participation in the preparation sessions. Any issues raised during the process are addressed. A comprehensive report is submitted to the Panel which enables them to make informed decisions.

Within the files examined, information is available about the health needs of children identified for adoption. It was evident where issues had been identified and children have been referred to the appropriate health care service. Adoptive parents are provided with comprehensive health information about children they have been matched with. They are also provided with all the health information that has been gathered about the children's birth family. If they have any questions, adopters have the opportunity to meet with the medical adviser to discuss the areas they would like more information about. They are also satisfied that if any further information is gathered post adoption that they will be informed.

Adopters are advised where they can get support from after they have adopted. They are able to choose from agencies such as the Group for Adopted People (GAP) and Post Adoption Central Support (PACS).

The Agency is still in discussions with neighbouring Local Authorities about developing post adoption support in response to the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007.

Areas for improvement

The Local Authority is in discussions with neighbouring authorities to develop one fostering and adoption service to cover the three Council areas. The plan is to develop a role for post adoption support within the new service. See recommendation 1 which is continued from the last inspection.

Grade awarded for this statement: 4 - Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 1

Recommendations

1. The work of other Local Authorities in relation to post adoption contact with birth families should continue to be progressed.

This is in order to comply with National Care Standards; Adoption Agencies, Standard 7.1 Keeping in Touch

Statement 6

People who use, or would like to use the service, and those who are ceasing the service, are fully informed as to what the service provides.

Service strengths

We found that the service is operating at a good level in regard to this Quality Statement.

Information can be accessed in various ways by people who are interested in adoption. They include the Council's website, an information pack or direct contact with a member of staff. The range of information includes the criteria that people need to meet to be considered as adopters, the application process, preparation groups and legal implications.

The service organises preparation sessions in response to people interested in adoption. If there are too few applicants to run a preparation group the service will arrange for them to attend a course being provided by neighbouring councils. This means that applicants are not subject to delays in their applications being processed.

When adopters are being considered as a match for children, they receive comprehensive information about them. This enables them to make an informed decision about whether to proceed or not.

When a match has been approved, adopters are involved in agreeing the plans for children to move. The support they will receive from the children's social worker and supervising social worker is also outlined.

Areas for improvement

As stated in Quality Theme 1, statement 1 areas for development, the service still has to develop a handbook for adopters.

Grade awarded for this statement: 4 – Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing - NOT ASSESSED

Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

Grade awarded for this theme: 4 - Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the management and leadership of the service.

Service strengths

As previously recognised in Quality Theme 1, Statement 1 we found the service provides a range of ways for adopters, children and young people to influence the development of the service.

Adopters would have the opportunity to comment on all areas of the service.

Clackmannanshire Council are currently in negotiations with neighbouring Authorities to develop an adoption agency that will cover the three council areas.

The Panel produce an annual report about the work they have undertaken. Although this reports on any issues, we found that they are addressed when they arise at individual panels. For example if reports are not submitted in time or contain all the information needed.

Areas for improvement

As the development of one adoption agency progresses there are plans to involve staff and adopters in shaping the future service.

Grade awarded for this statement: 4 - Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 3

To encourage good quality care, we promote leadership values throughout the workforce.

Service strengths

We found after discussion with staff, managers and examining documentation provided that the service is performing at a good level in relation to this Quality Statement.

Staff have access to training opportunities that develop their skills and knowledge. For example permanency planning and birth links.

Supervision is held regularly and offers the opportunity to discuss carers and the children in placement. Staff find this forum useful and offers them the opportunity to share ideas and suggestions for improving the service. Staff explained how any ideas are discussed at the team meeting. They feel, that as a team they can discuss areas for improvement and be involved in their development.

Staff roles and responsibilities have developed since the last inspection. Staff feel they are more involved in discussing improvements for the team and take responsibility of their development. For example staff ensure that resource meetings take place weekly so information is updated. This allows any issues to be followed up and the current situation of children reflected accurately.

During the inspection staff were observed to work well as a team. They supported each other well and ensured that information was passed on to colleagues to allow pieces of work to be continued. For example when they were trying to source a foster placement for a child.

Areas for improvement

A start has been made to develop policies and procedures for the service in relation to the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007.

Grade awarded for this statement: 4 - Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 4

We use quality assurance systems and processes which involve service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of service we provide

Service strengths

At an organisational and service level, there continues to be several systems in place to monitor and assess the work of the fostering and adoption team. We found that the service made good use of the information from these quality assurance systems to improve the quality of the service they provide. The local authority has an established complaints procedure.

Senior managers monitor the work of the service on an ongoing basis. They hold regular performance management and information meetings that include looking at the progress being made within the service.

The agency notifies SCSWIS as required and action plans are submitted following inspections.

There are established ways through which adopters can be involved in the evaluation of the service. Questionnaires are used to gather views at all stages of the preparation and assessment processes. They have input into planning for children. For example they are involved in organising and reviewing introduction plans for children.

The panel continues to play an invaluable role in the quality assurance process as they produce an annual report that highlights concerns regarding the content of reports or if they do not receive reports in time. Their comments are shared with Team Managers, Service Managers and the Agency Decision Maker through panel minutes and feedback forms. The panel felt that there has been an improvement in reports and that permanency planning meeting have helped move on historic cases.

The service keeps abreast of new developments and are currently trialling the new BAAF form F. They will give feedback about how effective this is.

Areas for improvement

The agency should continue to develop opportunities for adopters and other stakeholders to be involved in the self assessment process. They could use this document more effectively to show the outcome for adopters and children.

Ongoing work will continue with the neighbouring Councils in respect of developing a new Fostering and Adoption Service.

The service should consider ways to recruit more adoptive parents.

Grade awarded for this statement: 4 - Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

4 Other information

Complaints

No complaints have been upheld, or partially upheld, since the last inspection.

Enforcements

We have taken no enforcement action against this care service since the last inspection.

Additional Information

Action Plan

Failure to submit an appropriate action plan within the required timescale, including any agreed extension, where requirements and recommendations have been made, will result in SCSWIS re-grading the Quality Statement within the Management and Leadership Theme as unsatisfactory (1). This will result in the Quality Theme for Management and Leadership being re-graded as Unsatisfactory (1).

5 Summary of grades

Quality of Care and Support - 4 - Good	
Statement 1	4 - Good
Statement 3	4 - Good
Statement 6	4 - Good
Quality of Staffing - Not Assessed	
Quality of Management and Leadership - 4 - Good	
Statement 1	4 - Good
Statement 3	4 - Good
Statement 4	4 - Good

6 Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
11 Aug 2010	Announced	Care and support 4 - Good Staffing Not Assessed Management and Leadership 4 - Good
28 Sep 2009	Announced	Care and support 4 - Good Staffing 4 - Good Management and Leadership 3 - Adequate
18 Nov 2008	Announced	Care and support 2 - Weak Staffing 3 - Adequate Management and Leadership 2 - Weak

All inspections and grades before 1 April 2011 are those reported by the former regulator of care services, the Care Commission.

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