

# Care service inspection report

Full inspection

## Scottish Adoption - Adoption Service Adoption Service

161 Constitution Street  
Leith  
Edinburgh



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

Service provided by: Scottish Adoption

Service provider number: SP2004007006

Care service number: CS2004081907

Inspection Visit Type: Announced (Short Notice)

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and set out improvements that must be made. We also investigate complaints about care services and take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

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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	6	Excellent
Quality of staffing	6	Excellent
Quality of management and leadership		N/A

### What the service does well

The open and engaging culture within the organisation supported a continued commitment to ensuring that service users develop, influence and directly contribute to the work of the agency.

The quality of assessment, the preparation of prospective adoptive families and the support available post adoption; all contributed to an excellent quality of nurturing care for children and their adoptive families.

The investment of the organisation in supporting and training staff reflected the commitment to provide the highest possible care and to promote stable family situations. Staff were equipped to confidently provide the necessary practical and emotional support to children, young people and their families.

### What the service could do better

We noted that some further work could be completed in relation to electronic files to ensure that these were consistent. Some visits had not taken place at prescribed intervals. However, there was no suggestion that this contributed to people not feeling supported, or that outcomes were compromised in any way.

### What the service has done since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, the agency has had period of growth. They have extended their office base, recruited some new staff and continued to develop a range of therapeutic supports available to families. Staffing conditions have been changed to reflect a more flexible approach to working.

The agency has continued to develop and strengthen service user engagement. We could see a strong culture of participation within the service.

Scottish adoption continues to work meaningfully with people including adopters, young people/children who have been adopted and birth parents. Through this work they continue to highlight trends and to plan work aimed at supporting people. Scottish Adoption continue to share their learning more widely within the world of adoption to improve adoption services throughout Scotland.

### Conclusion

Scottish Adoption continues to provide a valuable resource to children in need of adoption in Scotland. The agency was knowledgeable, skilled and motivated to achieve positive outcomes for all service users. We saw this as an outward looking service which aimed to improve adoption services generally throughout Scotland.

# 1 About the service we inspected

Scottish Adoption's focus is on the recruitment, approval and support of adoptive parents and of post adoption work with families who have or are in the process of adoption, adopted adults and birth families. The service has been registered with the Care Inspectorate since 2011 when the Care Inspectorate was formed.

There is a policy of also approving adopters as foster carers in order that children, in the looked after system, can be placed where the plan is adoption and legal processes are ongoing. The service provided by the fostering agency is registered and inspected separately and was the subject of an inspection concurrent with this inspection of the adoption service. A separate report is available for the fostering service.

Scottish Adoption is based in Edinburgh and the chief executive holds overall management responsibility. This position is backed by a board of trustees. The chief executive is registered with the Care Inspectorate as the manager of the service.

There is one family placement team and one after adoption team, which are managed by practice managers. Recently, as part of the growth plan, the service had appointed additional staff. The chief executive and the practice managers work closely together on operational matters, with the board being responsible for the strategic direction of the agency.

At the time of the annual return, it was noted that the service had approved 51 new adopters between 1 January and 31 December 2015. Forty two children from a range of local authorities, including two children from outwith Scotland had been placed with adoptive families during the same year. Seventy adoptive families had received direct post adoption support in 2015 with a large number of other families benefitting from less targeted support through fun/activity days, attendance at groups and information exchange .

The aims of Scottish Adoption are contained within the agency's business plan to provide:

"a comprehensive range of high quality adoption services that meet the changing needs of everyone involved: children, birth families, prospective adopters, adoptive parents and adopted adults. Our services are guided by the principles of working in partnership, valuing diversity and treating individuals with respect".

## Recommendations

A recommendation is a statement that sets out actions that a care service provider should take to improve or develop the quality of the service, but where failure to do so would not directly result in enforcement.

Recommendations are based on the National Care Standards, SSSC codes of practice and recognised good practice. These must also be outcomes-based and if the provider meets the recommendation this would improve outcomes for people receiving the service.

## Requirements

A requirement is a statement which sets out what a care service must do to improve outcomes for people who use services and must be linked to a breach in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 (the "Act"), its regulations, or orders made under the Act, or a condition of registration. Requirements are enforceable in law.

We make requirements where (a) there is evidence of poor outcomes for people using the service or (b) there is the potential for poor outcomes which would affect people's health, safety or welfare.

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

**Quality of care and support - Grade 6 - Excellent**

**Quality of staffing - Grade 6 - Excellent**

**Quality of management and leadership - N/A**

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.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com) or by calling us on 0345 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 low intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections when we are satisfied that services are working hard to provide consistently high standards of care.

### What we did during the inspection

We wrote this report after an inspection which took place between Wednesday 29 June and Wednesday 20 July 2016 when we shared our inspection findings with the manager of the service. We told the service a few days in advance of our intention to start the inspection. The inspection was undertaken by one Inspector. An inspection of the fostering agency took place at the same time.

As requested by us, the adoption service sent us an annual return. They also completed a self-assessment of their service prior to the inspection starting.

We asked the service to send out short questionnaires to adopters, panel members and staff. We received nine responses from staff and four responses from panel members including the chairs of the panel and 11 responses from adoptive families.

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

- evidence from the services most recent self-evaluation
- evaluations of the service collected by the service
- training plans for staff
- the service user involvement plan for 2016
- evidence of post adoption support services
- team meeting minutes
- staff supervision records
- staff appraisal records



- Scottish Adoption website which contained a range of information including: video logs (Vlogs) of people who had used and were currently using the service.
- adopters' files
- some children's information
- email feedback from placing social workers.

We had discussion with:

- the chair of the board of trustees
- the manager of the service
- the practice managers within the service
- staff who worked in the agency
- the two adoption panel chairs
- adoptive families.

## 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.firescotland.gov.uk](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk)

## 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.

The self assessment was fully completed to a satisfactory standard and detailed areas where the agency assessed where they worked well and some areas for further development.

## Taking the views of people using the care service into account

We received written feedback from 11 adoptive families, had telephone contact with one adopter and met with a further five adoptive families. We met with two young people who had been adopted some years ago, and saw a further six younger children with their adoptive parents.

All the adopters we spoke with told us that this was an excellent service. They cited the quality of trusting relationships they had with their workers and the quality of post placement support as key strengths within the service,

Young people told us of the ongoing support they received and the importance of this at key stages in their lives. We saw that younger children enjoyed positive, nurturing relationships with their adoptive parents.

## Taking carers' views into account

We did not speak with birth parents as part of this inspection.

## 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

Grade awarded for this theme: 6 - Excellent

#### Statement 3

"We ensure that service users' health and wellbeing needs are met."

#### Service strengths

In the 2016/17 inspecting year the Care Inspectorate is scoping Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) practice in children and young people's services. This is part of our contribution to 'Scotland's National Action Plan to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation' and focuses on frameworks of CSE practice, staff understanding and care planning outcomes.

All services for looked after children, including adoption agencies will report on the above under Quality Theme 1, Quality Statement 3.

During this inspection we saw that people who used the service, adoptive families and children, consistently enjoyed very positive outcomes in relation to their health and continued wellbeing. The agency effectively used a range of resources to support stable family situations.

Adopters told us:

"Our worker has continued to offer us ongoing, consistent support. They have been a real life line over the years and we value the input greatly. I think they kept us sane to be honest when the stress of the legal process got to us!"

Families were supported to build an enduring connection with the agency. In this way children became comfortable with the building and tailored after-adoption support services could be offered from the start. A range of therapeutic interventions including art therapy, music therapy, play therapy and occupational therapy were available to families where appropriate. Individual support, group support and workshops offered a range of different ways in which families could access support.

The range and diversity of support available to adoptive families was outstanding. We saw occupational therapy interventions supporting schools to support children manage the stress of starting school, and art therapy supporting a child and parent to build attachment.

Adopters and adopted young people told us about the importance of ongoing support throughout their lives:

"I am so impressed with Scottish Adoption. They have provided such good post adoption care which has been continuous and of an excellent quality. It's kept us sane!"

Adopters told us they had a huge trust in their worker and this helped them to be honest about their feelings. Adoptive families were supported by their workers to consider the needs of children and their capacity to meet these needs throughout the child's life. This trust and honesty alongside good quality assessments meant that support could be appropriately tailored to needs at an early stage. Placing social workers told us that adoptive families were very well supported by the agency.

Adopters told us:

"Despite feeling very well prepared we found the introductions week challenging but were able to share our concerns with Scottish Adoption and they quickly arranged support which helped us to regain our confidence and feel much more positive about our new family."

The agency was well served by the Agency Medical Advisor. We were impressed at the thoroughness the medical advisor brought to the role, pursuing information to provide the best possible advice to the adoption panel. For example, where it was noted that a prospective adopter had a high BMI (Body Mass Index), the medical advisor sought information from the GP about the reasons for this, citing the need for an adopted child needing support to regulate their food intake.

Good quality information, workshops and assessments in relation to the capacity of the prospective adoptive family to meet the needs of the child, supported children to be safe in their placements. Adoptive parents understood the need to help their child build skills in keeping themselves safe by understanding the risks in their lives. Workshops on using the internet safely had been on offer.

The agency did not have a policy in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). We were advised that this was currently being developed and we are confident that this is the case. The agency noted that although the children starting to use the adoption service were young, the enduring relationship with the agency and the post adoption support services in particular, continued to have a relationship with young people into adulthood.

All staff and some adopters evidenced a good understanding of the risks and vulnerability indicators of CSE and advised that they would follow current child protection reporting procedures. There were currently no children identified as being at risk of CSE using the service.

### **Areas for improvement**

The agency should continue to develop the excellent practice in this area. We noted that some further work could be completed in relation to electronic files to ensure that these were consistent. Some visits had not taken place at prescribed intervals. However, there was no suggestion that this contributed to people not feeling supported or that outcomes were compromised in any way.

In conclusion, we assessed that there was outstanding evidence of the adoption agency supporting positive outcomes for children and their adoptive families in this area. The enduring relationship encouraged between adoptive families and the agency and the range, variety and accessibility to post placement support identified this agency as a leader in the field of adoption.

Good quality assessments and ongoing trusting relationships supported decision making about the appropriate placing of children. Post placement/ adoption support enhanced families' ability to continue to keep children safe and to provide good quality, nurturing care. This has informed the grade of excellent for this statement.

**Grade**

6 - Excellent

**Number of requirements - 0**

**Number of recommendations - 0**

## Statement 5

“We respond to service users' care and support needs using person centered values.”

### Service strengths

Following an assessment of the information given to us prior to the inspection we decided to consider this statement to consider how well the agency responded to individual support needs.

We assessed the service continued to be committed to ensuring that service users develop, influence and directly contribute to the work of the agency. By identifying what is helpful in relation to supports, the agency and adoptive families could continue to ensure that children lived in stable, nurturing homes and experience caring, warm and secure relationships.

People who used this service experienced a culture of engagement and openness. Given the ongoing, enduring relationship encouraged with families, we saw that a significant number of people were happy to work alongside the agency in improving adoption services in Scottish Adoption and also nationally throughout Scotland.

We spoke with adopters who were working alongside the agency in producing a resource pack for new adoptive families. Young adoption ambassadors told us how they were reaching out to adopted young people in Scottish Adoption and how their views had informed a national film about the experience of an adopted young person 'And Violet'. A number of changes had been made based directly on the experiences of young people.

The agency had worked alongside birth families as part of the 'Chance4Change Project'. This project had now been run twice on short-term funding and had been independently evaluated by Centre of Excellence for Looked After Children In Scotland (CELCIS). This unique and sector leading project aimed to provide professional, emotional and practical support to mothers who had recently had a child adopted and to help them break the cycle of children being removed.



Positive outcomes had been identified including supporting women with their feelings of loss and guilt and promoting positive contact with their child. This helped women understand what was in their child's best interests and supported the child's sense of their past and their present. In one case two children were able to stay at home. The agency now want to identify longer term funding streams to support this important and often neglected area of work.

We saw an individualised approach to supporting adoptive families. A range of activities both formal and informal were aimed at promoting a caring, flexible and person centred service.

Adopters told us:

"My adoptive daughter receives art therapy through Scottish Adoption which is superb. The worker is consistent, knowledgeable and extremely supportive of her and our family."

"My social worker has been great in providing insights into why my child behaves the way they do and what I can do to make them feel safe to decrease their anxiety and thus their controlling behaviour."

Contact arrangements were in place, some informally, to support children to maintain some knowledge about their families. We were impressed by adopters' statements about the importance of maintaining indirect contact for the sake of their child and their growing identity.

### Areas for improvement

The service should continue to develop the excellent practice in this area. In conclusion we assessed that there was outstanding evidence of the adoption agency supporting positive outcomes for service users in this area.

The openness and engaging culture of the agency meant that adopters and young people who had been adopted, were at the heart of designing and promoting support services aimed at providing good quality, nurturing care for families and children.

The outward focus of the agency meant that there was a commitment to improving adoption services to people throughout Scotland. This has informed the grade of excellent for this statement.

### **Grade**

6 - Excellent

**Number of requirements - 0**

**Number of recommendations - 0**

## Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Grade awarded for this theme: 6 - Excellent

### Statement 3

"We have a professional, trained and motivated workforce which operates to National Care Standards, legislation and best practice."

#### Service strengths

We looked at this statement at the time of the last inspection and at that time we assessed that the staff were operating at a very good level within the agency. We decided to look at this statement again as there had been some staff changes indicated through the annual return for the service, and the process of change highlighted at the last inspection had had some time to be established.

During the inspection we noted that all staff within the agency were professional and motivated in their work. We sampled some staff and noted that all were appropriately registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). The SSSC is the regulatory body for workers working in social care settings ([www.sssc.com](http://www.sssc.com)).

The agency continued to recruit experienced and skilled members of staff and all staff were competent senior practitioners in their field. Since the last inspection a flexible working scheme had been introduced and office changes and planning meant that teams were mixed throughout the building. Staff told us this made for informative and useful discussions about their work.

Staff told us:

"The service flexible working scheme exemplifies the management trust and value placed on the staff to lead enjoyable lives both in and out of work."

We spoke with a range of staff who told us that supervision was regular, fully recorded and of an excellent quality. We sampled some records and saw that appropriate levels of direction, guidance and reflection supported staff to feel confident in their work. This individualised approach to support meant that staff got the right amount of guidance and support to fully develop their practice, and deliver a consistently high quality of service to people who used the agency.

The appraisal process was very well established and implemented and evidenced significant high staff performance. The appraisal processes were being further developed to include a user focus to staff improvement. This had started at practice manager level and was being developed to include all staff. The process, although daunting, supported the open and engaging culture within the agency.

The future plan for the service was one of consolidation following the previous years growth. This message had been clearly communicated throughout the agency and staff saw this as a clear opportunity to further develop their work. Staff were motivated to raise ideas at the regular team meetings aimed at further developing the service.

Training within the agency was exemplary. Core training evidenced a clear commitment to working therapeutically with families and individualised training budgets. This ensured that staff could access specific and targeted training even where this was available at a distance and at considerable cost.

All staff understood the need to share and build on training and together this meant that staff within the agency were very knowledgeable about adoption, and the need to assess and support families who could provide stable, nurturing care to children throughout their lives.

Staff told us:

"Training opportunities are great...and we are given a lot of freedom to explore different ways of working therapeutically with families to best meet the child's needs".

The majority of staff told us of the commitment of the agency to ensure that the workforce were kept up to date with emerging best practice and research.

All adopters who contributed to the inspection told us that they thought their supervising social workers were extremely knowledgeable and skilled in their work and as a result the support they received was of an excellent quality.

## Areas for improvement

The service should continue to develop the excellent practice in this area.

In conclusion, we assessed that there were outstanding strengths in the quality of staffing. Due to the quality of supervision, the user focus towards staff improvement and the commitment to specialist training, staff were equipped to confidently and effectively provide the necessary practical and emotional support to children, young people and their families (adoptive and birth). This has informed the grade of excellent for this statement.

## Grade

6 - Excellent

**Number of requirements - 0**

**Number of recommendations - 0**

## Statement 4

"We ensure that everyone working in the service has an ethos of respect towards service users and each other."

### Service strengths

We decided to consider this statement following the annual information sent to us by the service which indicated a number of changes for the staff throughout the year. This included changes to team membership, changes to the geography of the office and the introduction of more flexible working. At this inspection we saw that these changes had clearly been managed extremely well and resulted in improved outcomes for staff and people who used the service.

The open and engaging culture within the organisation clearly supported adoptive families and young people who had been adopted to feel respected and valued within the organisation. For adoptive families this was about being listened to and being welcomed into the office. They told us that workers turning up on time, validating their emotional responses to issues and offering sound advice helped them to feel valued and respected.

One young ambassador told us:

"It is empowering that our voices are being heard. It is such a positive thing. We feel very respected and highly valued."

For staff this was about an accessible and supportive management who took time to prepare for supervision and to follow-up on issues. Staff felt listened to and that their work was appreciated. The commitment of the organisation to training was seen as a key strength and mark of respect.

We observed adopters being respectful of the confidentiality of their children and saw that they advocated for them appropriately.

## Areas for improvement

The agency should continue to promote the open, engaging and respectful culture throughout the organisation.

In conclusion, we assessed that there were outstanding strengths in this area. The open and engaging culture generated an atmosphere of trust and respect for all people using or working in the service. We heard no dissent from this view. This has informed the grade of excellent for this statement.

## Grade

6 - Excellent

**Number of requirements - 0**

**Number of recommendations - 0**

## Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

Quality theme not assessed

### 4 What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at our last inspection

#### Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

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

#### Previous recommendations

1. The service should ensure that all information is appropriately recorded and retained in files.

National Care Standards adoption agencies. Standard 32: management and staffing.

**This recommendation was made on 17 November 2014**

The agency had introduced a system of three-monthly audits. Although we saw that there was still some improvement needed we assessed that the service had taken appropriate action in respect of the recommendation made.



2. The service should ensure that the Care Inspectorate are informed of all notifiable events as detailed in guidance on notification reporting published by the Care Inspectorate.

National Care Standards adoption agencies. Standard 32: management and staffing.

**This recommendation was made on 17 November 2014**

We were satisfied that the agency were aware of what constituted notifiable events and notifications would be made as appropriate.

## 6 Complaints

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

## 7 Enforcements

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

## 8 Additional Information

No additional information.

## 9 Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
2 Oct 2014	Announced (Short Notice)	Care and support	6 - Excellent
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very Good
		Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good
21 Oct 2013	Announced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	6 - Excellent
		Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good
21 Feb 2013	Announced (Short Notice)	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and Leadership	4 - Good
28 Jul 2010	Announced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	Not Assessed
		Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good
10 Sep 2009	Announced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good
23 Jul 2008	Announced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and Leadership	4 - Good

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本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.