

Scottish Adoption - Adoption Service Adoption Service

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Edinburgh
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Type of inspection:

Announced (short notice)

Completed on:

3 September 2018

Service provided by:

Scottish Adoption

Service provider number:

SP2004007006

Service no:

CS2004081907

About the service

The focus of Scottish Adoption is the recruitment, approval and support of pre-adoptive and adoptive parents and of post placement and post adoption work with families and adopted adults. The service has been registered with the Care Inspectorate since 2011.

Scottish Adoption provide a limited fostering and family placement service for children who require a fostering placement prior to adoption. This involves people planning to adopt, being approved and acting as foster carers until the child's adoption plan is concluded.

Scottish Adoption is based in Edinburgh and the Chief Executive holds overall management responsibility. The position is supported by a board of trustees.

Since the last inspection, 72 adopters have been approved by the service and 79 Adoption Orders have been granted in respect of 99 children. At the time of this inspection, 28 applicants were currently being assessed as potential foster carers/adopters.

Scottish adoption state that they aim 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'.

The adoption service provided by the agency is registered and inspected separately and was the subject of an inspection that was carried out simultaneously with the inspection of their fostering service. A separate report is published for each service.

What people told us

We carried out four home visits to adopters where their adopted child(ren) were present. We met with two adopted young people who were visiting the service, both of whom spoke positively about their experience of supports. We spoke with a total of 12 foster carers/adopters during the course of our inspection, received detailed written feedback from eight foster carer/adopters and also spoke with placing social workers.

Although the findings of the inspection are based upon a sample of children and young people and therefore inspectors cannot assure the quality of experience for every single child receiving a service, it is of note that all foster carers/adopters we spoke with advised that they would strongly recommend Scottish Adoption to others who were considering the adoption process.

The following are some comments from adopters/foster carers:

"In short, the service that they provide is outstanding."

"They have always been thoughtful and considered, responsive and helpful whenever we have approached them with issues or concerns and we have found that reassuring."

"They are proactive about developing their post-adoption support for families so that different needs from within different families can be supported."

"Excellent service staffed by wonderful social workers that have responded to our needs throughout the process."

"All the workers I have encountered both pre and post-adoption are extremely knowledgeable and supportive."

"We have been made to feel welcome at all times...we have been supported in every imaginable way..."

"Scottish Adoption is an amazing service, the support we have received through our journey has been outstanding."

Self assessment

The service was not required to submit a self assessment for this inspection. They provided us with their Service Action plan 2018/19 and supporting document Service User Partnership plan 2018/19 which outlined the organisation's direction and future objectives.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	6 - Excellent
Quality of staffing	6 - Excellent
Quality of management and leadership	5 - Very Good

What the service does well

The Scottish Adoption premises provide a safe, welcoming environment which is a secure and familiar base to which people can connect as part of their lifelong experience with the service.

We found the service is committed to the provision of an extensive breadth of supports to adoptive families, from the point of initial inquiry and throughout their adoption journey, which are needs led and of excellent quality. These very comprehensive supports were provided by a highly skilled, enthusiastic and motivated workforce who evidence a genuine commitment to the children and families who used the service. Staff spoke very positively about their training experiences and the ways in which this acted to enhance and inform their practice. Their commitment to service developments which would support achieving excellent outcomes for children and families using the service was also absolutely clear.

There was also strong evidence of staff developing positive working relationships and working very effectively with placing social workers, authorities and partner agencies such as education, leading to children experiencing increased sense of achievement. Feedback from placing Social Workers was very positive, highlighting the significant work undertaken by Scottish Adoption staff to ensure consistently smooth and positive transitions for children, describing workers as "approachable and responsive" and "very knowledgeable and thorough".

Form F Assessments (the assessment tool used to assess prospective adopters) were very well written, evaluative and considered in their conclusions. This was reflected in feedback from panel members and foster carers/adopters. All necessary statutory checks were carried out to ensure the safety of children. Panel members advised that the high quality of fostering/adoption assessments presented to them helped to inform their decision making process. Very positive feedback from foster carers/adopters reflected the view around the quality of these assessments and the high quality way in which staff undertake them.

The service has a very low number of placement disruptions, contributed to by not only the robust assessment and matching processes but also the significant and high quality post placement and adoption support available. This supported children to experience secure and loving family life. There was evidence of the service adapting practice in response to learning and experience of disruption to promote positive outcomes in the future.

A further major strength of the service is the post adoption support which is available. These services continue to grow and be tailored in line with emerging needs. This support includes, but is not restricted to, access to the Adoption therapy Centre and its resources, individual support for specific issues, the 'WISE UP' programme (a workshop that provides adopted children with the tools to manage comments and questions about their adoption story), a Transition group (for parent and children to help the transition from nursery to primary school), a variety of children's groups, family fun days, workshops and individual consultations with an international trainer, therapist and adoption consultant. This has led to increased opportunity for children and families to have better health and wellbeing outcomes.

In addition, the service has now established their Adoption Therapy Centre which aims to provide sector leading, innovative post adoption services. It offers therapeutic support to help children manage their feelings and behaviours, while giving parents the skills and tools they need to help their children. This involves using a multidisciplinary team of therapists to work to one assessment and support plan for each family offering more integrated and tailored post adoption support. Supports include art therapy, music therapy, play therapy, occupational therapy/sensory integration and coaching/mentoring from experienced adoptive parents.

We spoke with a number of foster carers/adopters who had accessed support from music and art therapists, all of whom expressed the positive impact their involvement had on their children and the family as a whole. We also heard from adoptive families of the significant input provided by the occupational therapist in promoting and achieving very positive outcomes in terms of education, including supporting parents and children with school transitions (including reintegration into education) through direct work with them and also the school.

Foster carers/adopters advised that they were regularly asked for feedback of their experience. The service recognises that this area could be further improved to allow them to capture more meaningful responses to inform evaluation and have sought input from CELCIS to support them in moving towards a more evidence based evaluation framework, particularly in relation to the Adoption therapy Centre.

The service currently has four Young Adoption Ambassadors who have been involved in a number of innovative and fundamental aspects of the service including recruitment, presentation to preparation groups, developing questions for feedback from young adopted people and involvement in training for panel members. We are aware the service is currently in the process of recruitment for Young Adoption Ambassadors as some of the existing ambassadors are moving on from their roles.

Scottish Adoption continue to evidence an incredibly strong commitment to sharing learning and supporting other organisations to develop their services. For example -

- Their current involvement in 'Voices of Adoption' (a project which aims to encourage adopted young people to share their story about adoption through film making and a conference which will be part of Adoption Week Scotland 2018). We spoke with an adoptive parent whose child was involved in this project and they reflected the positive impact of their involvement as giving their child the opportunity to "be involved" and "feeling they have a voice".

- Recent support of the film 'And Violet' (written and directed by an adoptive parent who is also a member of their fostering/adoption panel and also involving the advice and perspectives of a birth parent and adopted teenagers who were involved with the service) where the service then offered the film to local authorities across Scotland for screening and question and answer sessions. The service plan to make further use of this film and have produced some written materials that potentially would allow them to effectively use it in conjunction with a training pack in future work, for example preparation groups.

We noted the service development plan was dynamic and evidenced strong commitment to ongoing improvement and it was clear that the service continues to develop meaningfully to meet emerging needs. The service user participation plan which supports this document detailed the organisation's commitment to the involvement and influence of service users within every aspect of the work they undertake.

What the service could do better

During the course of the inspection we identified some areas for improvement which led to us incorporating the theme of management and leadership. Some aspects of this theme have therefore been considered in our inspection findings and we will continue to monitor these and consider them at the point of the next inspection. We discussed these in more detail at feedback with the Chief Executive who expressed a strong commitment to addressing these areas for improvement.

The service has experienced a number of significant staffing changes in recent months and it was noted that they met the challenges which came with this, striving to ensure that this had minimal impact on service delivery. The impact of these changes do however highlight the need to ensure regular, robust, formal supports are in place for staff and volunteers, alongside the informal support which is frequently available and utilised.

At the time of the last inspection (2016) reporting took place on recommendations from the previous inspection (2014) noting that the agency had introduced a system of three monthly audits to address identified issues. At the time of this inspection (2018) it was acknowledged by the service that this had not been sustainable and was no longer in place. No alternative system of internal quality assurance was found to have been implemented by the service to replace it. In order that people experiencing the service can have confidence in the organisation we have encouraged the service to develop and implement a robust and transparent quality assurance system as this would significantly strengthen and support consistency and improvements in the areas we identified (See Recommendation 1).

While our findings indicated major strengths and some areas of outstanding practice we also found a few improvements were needed to ensure the service's current performance level remains consistent, sustainable and continuously improving. Taking all of our findings into account, we have graded excellent for the themes of care and support and staffing, and very good for the theme of management and leadership.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 1

1. The provider should develop their current recording and quality assurance systems, ensuring that they are robust and used effectively in order to identify areas for improvement. This will support consistency in the quality of recording across the service and timescales being achieved. This ensures that the care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (Health and Social Care Standards 4.19).

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
20 Jul 2016	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership
		6 - Excellent Not assessed 6 - Excellent Not assessed
2 Oct 2014	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership
		6 - Excellent Not assessed 5 - Very good 5 - Very good
21 Oct 2013	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership
		5 - Very good Not assessed 6 - Excellent 5 - Very good
21 Feb 2013	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership
		4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good 4 - Good

Date	Type	Gradings	
28 Jul 2010	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good Not assessed Not assessed 5 - Very good
10 Sep 2009	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good Not assessed 4 - Good 5 - Very good
23 Jul 2008	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good 4 - Good

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