

Stirling Council - Adoption Service

Adoption Service

Children's Services - Social Work
Stirling Council
Municipal Buildings
8-10 Corn Exchange Road
Stirling
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Telephone: 01786 471177

Type of inspection: Announced (short notice)
Inspection completed on: 23 May 2017

Service provided by:
Stirling Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002689

Care service number:
CS2005089712

About the service

Stirling Council Adoption Agency is a well-managed service for children who are assessed by the local authority as being in need of this service. The service recruits and supports adoptive parents to provide families for children who cannot live with their birth families and whose needs have been assessed as being best met in an adoptive family. The service is based in Stirling and is delivered by a highly skilled and knowledgeable staff team.

This service was previously registered with the Care Commission and transferred its registration to the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

What people told us

We spoke with adopters in their homes and at focus groups, who were all at various different stages of the process. They reported consistent, efficient, positive and supportive inputs from the service.

Self assessment

The service submitted a comprehensive self-assessment document.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	5 - Very Good
Quality of staffing	5 - Very Good
Quality of management and leadership	not assessed

What the service does well

Processes in Stirling were timeous from adopter's initial enquiry to being allocated a worker to begin the assessment process. Preparation groups were provided by the local consortium of neighbouring local authorities who took turns at providing the groups. Adopters reported high quality inputs from the Stirling preparation groups. They told us that staff were fully supportive and respectful when undertaking assessment processes. Several adopters told us that staff from the Stirling team were so kind and supportive during the process that some had come to regard them as 'part of the family.' We found Form F's (The assessment tool used in Stirling to assess prospective adopters) to be well written, evaluative and considered in their conclusions. Panel members informed us that the high quality of adoption assessments presented to them helped to inform their decision making processes.

Linking meeting minutes evidenced well measured matches and addressed how adopter's abilities would meet the needs of the child or children. Processes were inclusive of adopters and they told us that they felt informed and supported throughout the linking and matching developments and we found that children were receiving the best supports in their placements as a result of informed care. Adopters that we spoke with told us that introductions were quick and that experienced foster carers made the experience very positive and some foster carers remained in contact with the children and the adopter's after placements had been made. Adopters told us this was very beneficial for all parties.

Where appropriate, birth parents and adoptive parents were encouraged to meet and discuss children at relevant

stages of the adoption process. Adopters told us that they valued these introductions as they felt it would benefit children in the long-term in terms of their identity.

Adopters spoke very highly of the skills and knowledge of the staff team in particular, about their ability to carry out assessments in a professional and respectful manner. We found the staff team were highly motivated, well trained and immersed in best practice. They were supported well by an encouraging management team. Both staff and management presented to us as wholly committed to providing good outcomes for children using the service and we found that they were highly effective in delivering opportunities for this to be achieved. The importance of getting it right for children was apparent in all processes and central to the decision making across permanence planning. Staff were not afraid to present a professional challenge where they felt that this was not happening. The team worked closely with their area teams to support permanence work and area teams spoke highly of the working relationships they had.

Post adoption support assessments were detailed and well thought through and we felt that this area could continue to be further developed as staff showed great knowledge and skill within this area.

What the service could do better

Stirling Council has recently separated from their joint arrangement with Clackmannanshire Council and, as such, the strategic vision and development plans need time to be embedded and developed. We did find cases where some children's plans were delayed or decision making not clear during the inspection process due to the impact of the recent separation. However, we felt confidently reassured that both staff and management at Stirling Council were aware of these instances and supporting them to the best of their abilities.

The role of the agency medical advisor was not well developed within the agency and, as a result, the adoption panel did not benefit as well as they might from the knowledge and advice afforded by this role. Panel members told us that this can impact on their ability make fully informed decisions and can often leave prospective adopters at a loss for information about children they are matched with. This has been a long-standing issue for the service and we have asked that it be addressed during previous inspections. During this inspection we considered that the agency had made strong attempts to address this situation and as a result we have not reduced the overall grade. However, although the compromise agreement reached would meet the regulatory requirement, we did not believe that this would promote the best outcomes for children and as such we will continue to monitor this situation.

We spoke with the adoption panel about the quality of their training and support and whilst they noted an improvement within this area they suggested that time for peer support and reflective discussions would be helpful. They also suggested that stronger connections with the management of departments such as health and education could be developed to support and understand the work of panel members from these disciplines. We fed this back to the manager of the service who was keen to progress these areas.

We spoke with an adopter focus group and the service about the development of a prospective adopter's handbook which might outline expected timescales and things that may impact on that providing some reference information whilst the process is ongoing for them. Both the service and the focus group agreed that this could be helpful.

The adoption agency intends to continue to drive forward their focus on post adoption support both for adopters and for birth families; the service is well positioned to build on this area of strength.

The areas we have identified for improvement did not call into question the overall, very good practice highlighted within this report.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

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	
16 Jul 2015	Announced (short notice)	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	4 - Good
19 Jun 2014	Announced (short notice)	Care and support	2 - Weak
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and leadership	3 - Adequate
18 Sep 2013	Announced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and leadership	4 - Good
29 Sep 2011	Announced (short notice)	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	Not assessed
		Management and leadership	4 - Good
12 Jan 2011	Announced	Care and support	3 - Adequate
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	Not assessed
		Management and leadership	3 - Adequate
19 Feb 2009	Announced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and leadership	4 - Good

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