



Inspection report

Highland Council Adoption Service Adoption Service

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Inspected by: Kathleen Sutherland
(Care Commission officer)

Type of inspection: Announced

Inspection completed on: 14 October 2010

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Service provided by:

Highland Council

Service provider number:

SP2003001693

Care service number:

CS2004082039

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Easy read summary of this inspection report

There is a six point grading scale. Each of the Quality Themes we inspected, is graded using the following scale:

We can choose from six grades:



We gave the service these grades

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

This inspection report and grades are our assessment of the quality of how the service is performing in the areas we examined during this inspection.

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

What the service does well

- Assessments are carried out within the timescales.
- The quality of assessments are very good.
- Any delay is monitored and recorded and the reason for this identified.
- Support for prospective adopters is very good.
- The administration support provided to the permanency panel is of a high quality.

What the service could do better

- The service provider to continue to gain the views of prospective, adopters to inform practice.
- The work being carried out with regards to the implementation of the new adoption legislation needs to be progressed.
- The service provider had identified in the Self Assessment that an area of focus for improvement would be to evaluate training activities with prospective adopters.

What the service has done since the last inspection

- Following consultation with adopters who were very positive about the independent Consultation service this was re started and held on a monthly basis. The independent Consultation service is a central building block in adoption support services to adopters.
- A group of prospective adopters and adopters without placements piloted the new training evaluation sheet and this was very positive.
- Work is being progressed with regards to the new requirements with regards to the appeals process and the review process.
- Some adopters completed a questionnaire for the Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) conference and this included ways in which services could improve.

Conclusion

We concluded that Highland Council's Adoption Service was continuing to provide a high standard of care and support to people who used the service. We concluded that staff were very dedicated to their respective roles and received a very high level of support from senior management. Prospective adopters and adopters we spoke with told us that they were

well supported and field social workers we spoke with also said they had very good relationships with staff within the Adoption Service.

Who did this inspection

Lead Care Commission Officer

Kathleen Sutherland

Other Care Commission Officers

Lay Assessor

Please read all of this report so that you can understand the full findings of this inspection.

About the Care Commission

We were set up in April 2002 to regulate and improve care services in Scotland.

Regulation involves:

- registering new services
- inspecting services
- investigating complaints
- taking enforcement action, when necessary, to improve care services.

We regulate around 15,000 services each year. Many are childminders, children's daycare services such as nurseries, and care home services. We regulate many other kinds of services, ranging from nurse agencies to independent healthcare such as hospices and private hospitals.

We regulate services for the very young right through to those for the very old. Our work can, therefore, affect the lives of most people in Scotland.

All our work is about improving the quality of care services.

We produce thousands of inspection reports every year; all are published on our website: www.carecommission.com. Reports include any complaints we investigate and improvements that we ask services to make.

The "Care services" area of our website also:

- allows you to search for information, such as reports, about the services we regulate
- has information for the people and organisations who provide care services
- has guidance on looking for and using care services in Scotland.

You can also get in touch with us if you would like more detailed information.

About the National Care Standards

The National Care Standards (NCS) set out the standards that people who use care services in Scotland should expect. The aim is to make sure that you receive the same high quality of service no matter where you live.

Different types of service have different National Care Standards. When we inspect a care service we take into account the National Care Standards that the service should provide.

The Scottish Government publishes copies of the National Care Standards online at: www.scotland.gov.uk

You can get printed copies free from:

Booksource
50 Cambuslang Road
Cambuslang Investment Park
Glasgow
G32 8NB
Tel: 0845 370 0067
Fax: 0845 370 0068
Email: scottishgovernment@booksource.net

What is inspection?

Our inspectors, known as Care Commission Officers (CCOs), check care services regularly to make sure that they are meeting the needs of the people in their care.

One of the ways we check on services is to carry out inspections. We may turn up without telling the service's staff in advance. This is so we can see how good the care is on a normal day. We inspect some types of services more often than others.

When we inspect a service, typically we:

- talk to people who use the service, their carers and families, staff and managers
- talk to individuals and groups
- have a good look around and check what quality of care is being provided
- look at the activities happening on the day
- examine things like records and files, if we need to
- find out if people get choices, such as food, choosing a key worker and controlling their own spending money.

We also use lay assessors during some inspections. These are volunteers who have used care services or have helped to care for someone who has used care services.

We write out an inspection report after gathering the information. The report describes how things are and whether anything needs to change.

Our work must reflect the following laws and guidelines:

- the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001
- regulations made under this Act
- the National Care Standards, which set out standards of care that people should be able to expect to receive from a care service.

This means that when we register or inspect a service we make sure it meets the requirements of the 2001 Act. We also take into account the National Care Standards that apply to it.

If we find a service is not meeting these standards, the 2001 Act gives us powers that require the service to improve.

Recommendations, requirements and complaints

If we are concerned about some aspect of a service, or think it could do more to improve its service, we may make a requirement or recommendation.

- A recommendation is a statement that sets out actions the care service provider should take to improve or develop the quality of the service but where failure to do so will not directly result in enforcement.
- A requirement is a statement which sets out what is required of a care service to comply with the Act and Regulations or Orders made under the Act, or a condition of registration. Where there are breaches of the Regulations, Orders or conditions, a requirement must be made. Requirements are legally enforceable at the discretion of the Care Commission.

Complaints: We have a complaints procedure for dealing with any complaint about a registered care service (or about us). Anyone can raise a concern with us - people using the service, their family and friends, carers and staff.

We investigate all complaints. Depending on how complex it is, a complaint may be:

- upheld - where we agree there is a problem to be resolved
- not upheld - where we don't find a problem
- partially upheld - where we agree with some elements of the complaint but not all of them.

How we decided what to inspect

Why we have different levels of inspection

We target our inspections. This means we spend less time with services we are satisfied are working hard to provide consistently high standards of care. We call these low-intensity inspections. Services where there is more concern receive more intense inspections. We call these medium or high intensity inspections.

How we decide the level of inspection

When planning an inspection, our inspectors, or Care Commission Officers (CCOs) carefully assess how intensively each service needs to be inspected. They do this by considering issues such as:

- complaints
- changes to how the service provides care
- any notifications the service has given us, such as the absence of a manager
- what action the service has taken in response to requirements we have made.

The CCO will also consider how the service responded to situations and issues: for example how it deals with complaints, or notifies us about incidents such as the death of someone using the service.

Our inspections take account of:

- areas of care that we are particularly interested in (these are called Inspection Focus Areas)
- the National Care Standards that the service should be providing
- recommendations and requirements that we made in earlier inspections
- any complaints and other regulatory activity, such as enforcement actions we have taken to improve the service.

What is grading?

We grade each service under Quality Themes which for most services are:

- **Quality of Care and Support:** how the service meets the needs of each individual in its care
- **Quality of Environment:** the environment within the service (for example, is the service clean, is it set out well, is it easy to access by people who use wheelchairs?);
- **Quality of Staffing:** the quality of the care staff, including their qualifications and training
- **Quality of Management and Leadership:** how the service is managed and how it develops to meet the needs of the people it cares for
- **Quality of Information:** this is how the service looks after information and manages record keeping safely.

Each of the Quality Themes has a number of Quality Statements in it, which we grade.

We grade each heading as follows:

6	5	4	3	2	1
excellent	very good	good	adequate	weak	unsatisfactory

We do not give one overall grade.

How grading works.

Services assess themselves using guidance that we given them. Our inspectors take this into account when they inspect and grade the service. We have the final say on grading.

The Quality Themes for this service type are explained in section 2 The Inspection.

About the service we inspected

Highland Council Adoption Service provides a service for children, young people and their families who were assessed as in need of the service. The service recruits and supports adoptive parents to provide families for those children who could not live with their birth families or extended family members and whose needs were assessed as best met in an adoptive family.

The service was based in Inverness and was managed by the Fostering and Adoption Manager.

Resources on a day to day basis was managed by 3 Team Managers. All senior staff had considerable experience in both fostering and adoption work. All staff working within the team had a professional social work qualification. The team is supported by 4 full time and 2 part time administrative staff all of whom also have considerable experience in fostering and adoption work.

The aims and objectives of Highland Council's Adoption Service included.

'The best interests of the child are met'. To recruit, prepare and inform, assess, approve, train, support, monitor and review a range of prospective adopters to meet the needs of Looked After Children, and meet the lifelong needs of children when they were adopted.

To ensure that prospective adopters know what services were available to them and their adopted children, and formalise this in a post adoption agreement meeting.

To comply with the regulations that govern the Permanency (Adoption) Panel, and work towards the National Care Standards, particularly about lay membership.

To ensure that delay is minimised by monitoring the permanency process.

To make decisions about children considering their views and wishes.

To prepare children for adoption, keep them informed at the different stages, focussing on safety, security and identity.

To promote, respect and take into account a child's culture, ethnicity, language, religion and any disability when making decisions and to consider the views of parents with regards this.

To acknowledge the needs of birth parents in the adoption process, their contribution to the child's future security and identity by offering specific work on the issues that may affect them.

To ensure that adults affected by adoption have access to information and services which support them in making sense of their history, but ensuring that any adopted child's needs and wishes are central.

To ensure that children that were adopted are supported in their access to their records and to their birth family.

Highland Council's Adoption Service was registered with the Care Commission on 21st October 2005.

At 31 December 2009 (the statistical date within the Care Commission's Annual Return) there were 32 approved adopters with 11 having being approved between 1st January and 31st December 2009. There were 22 adopters waiting for placements. 107 families

had received post adoption support. There were five outstanding applications for adopters. The total number of enquiries were 63 and the total number of new applications for adopters approved was nine. The total number of new applications received was 20. 18 children had been approved for adoption by the adoption panel. Nine children had been placed with approved adopters. Six children were awaiting placement with adopters. No adoption placements had been disrupted. One pre adoption placement had been disrupted and two post adoption placements were disrupted. No children had been placed for adoption outside Scotland. No children had been placed for adoption outwith the United Kingdom.

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

Quality of Care and Support	5 - Very Good
Quality of Staffing	N/A
Quality of Management and Leadership	N/A

This inspection report and grades are our assessment of the quality of how the service is performing in the areas we examined during this inspection.

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

You can use the "Care services" area of our website (www.carecommission.com) to find the most up-to-date grades for this service.

How we inspected this service

What level of inspection did we make this service

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 activities did we undertake during the inspection

We wrote this report after an announced inspection was carried out by Care Commission Officer, Kathleen Sutherland. The inspection took place between 11 and 14 October 2010 and feedback was given to the Manager of the service on 14 October 2010. From October 2010 the Care Commission has temporarily introduced an additional less intense inspection approach for services which have previously reached a good level of performance. This service qualified for this reduced inspection approach and was therefore inspected only against the Quality Theme Care and Support at this inspection. We gathered evidence from a variety of sources and took account of the information provided to us in the self-evaluation that had been returned to us by the service. We looked at specific files with regards to the adoption process and examined the following policies and procedures.

- Child Protection Policy and Procedure.
- Participation Strategy.
- Safe Caring Policy.
- Induction Programme.
- Training Records.
- Staff Training Records.
- Advocacy Information.
- Initial Information Pack.
- Information to applicants.
- Case files of adopters
- Adopters contact records with link Social Workers.
- Minutes of Adopters Meetings.
- Completed questionnaires.

We spoke with the following people:

- Prospective adopters, adopters.
- Staff working within the Adoption Service.
- The manager of the Adoption Service.
- Field Social Workers.
- Other stakeholders.

We attended the fostering panel and spoke with members and applicants who were undergoing approval on the day.

Inspection Focus Areas (IFAs)

Each year we identify an area, or areas, we want to focus on during our inspections. We still inspect all the normal areas of a care service; these are extra checks we make for a specific reason.

For 2010/11 we will focus on:

- Quality assurance for care at home and combined care at home and housing support services.

You can find out more about these from our website www.carecommission.com.

Fire safety issues

The Care Commission no longer reports on matters of fire safety as part of its regulatory function. Where significant fire safety issues become apparent, we will alert the relevant Fire and Rescue service to their existence in order that it may act as it considers appropriate. Care service providers can find more information about their legal responsibilities in this area at: www.infoscotland.com/firelaw

The annual return

We use annual returns (ARs) to:

- make sure we have up-to-date, accurate information about care services; and
- decide how we will inspect services.

By law every registered care service must send us an annual return and provide us with the information we have requested. The relevant law is the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, Section 25(1). These forms must be returned to us between 6 January and 15 February.

Annual Return Received

Yes - Electronic

Comments on Self Assessment

As in all other years the Self Assessment had been completed to a very high standard and we were satisfied with its content. The service provider had identified strengths and areas for improvement.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

We spoke with field social workers, link social workers and health care professionals. Comments noted included the following:

- We have a very good working relationship with staff in the Adoption service.
- We get very good support from our managers.
- We communicate very well.
- I think staff and management in the adoption service are very dedicated to the work they do.
- I have a lot of respect for the staff and management in the adoption service and hold them in high regard.

Taking carers' views into account

We spoke with prospective, adopters. Comments noted included the following:

- I get very good support from my link worker.
- I can contact my link worker whenever I need and there is always someone there if she is not around.
- I found the assessment to be very thorough and at the end of it I felt physically drained but I knew that this had to be carried out in a very careful way.
- I get regular visits from my link worker and I can speak about anything with them.

Quality Theme 1: Quality of Care and Support

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very 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

Previous inspections of Highland Council's adoption service identified many strengths with regards to the way in which people could express their views about the quality of care and support they provide. The formal Participation Strategy which Highland Council had in place clearly stated that service provision took account of people views and people were encouraged to participate whenever they could.

Consultation had been carried out with adopters about the independent consultation service that had been offered and as a result of the positive feedback this service was resumed on a monthly basis. This service offered an additional support to adopters. Questionnaires had been issued to adopters to evaluate this service and these were very positive. Regular multi agency support meetings and reviews provided additional forums where adopters could express their views. When prospective adopters attend the permanency panel they were provided with a feedback questionnaire and we looked at these when we carried out this inspection. Members of the panel welcomed peoples views and encouraged people to participate wherever they could. We looked at a random selection of the questionnaires when we carried out this inspection. A Newsletter was provided by the service and when we looked at these we saw that relevant up to date information was provided and this included new members of staff within the adoption service.

When we spoke with prospective adopters and adopters they were very positive about the quality of service provision. They told us that they received regular visits from their link social worker and when we looked at case files we saw that these visits were recorded. We were told that there was never a problem if they needed to contact their link social worker and that there was always someone on hand if they had a problem. Comments noted included the following:

- I get very good support from my link social worker.
- I find that I can talk to her about anything.
- The assessment that was carried out was very thorough and we were kept informed throughout the process.
- There was a delay with the adoption process but this was due to Court stuff and nothing to do with the adoption service.

Children and young people were able to express their views in various ways, for example, through the formal review system, contact with their social workers, social events and access to Advocacy Services. Children were encouraged to complete the 'Having Your Say' document to say how they felt and they were assisted to do this when required. We looked at the annual report from 'Who Cares Scotland' and saw that regular contact was made with children and this included children placed outwith the local area.

Children whose plan was adoption were placed initially on a fostering basis and this enabled prospective adopters to access all the service provisions available to foster carers and this included regular reviews and access to training.

Areas for Improvement

- The service provider should continue to gain the views of people who use the service and use these to inform future practice.
- The service provider should continue to work on the implementation of the 2007, 2009 Regulations and 2010 guidance.
- The service provider had identified in the Self Assessment returned to us that an area for improvement was to evaluate training activities with prospective adopters and adopters.

Grade awarded for this statement

5 - Very 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

The health of prospective adopters was assessed before approval and updated every two years. The health of prospective adopters is also monitored through yearly reviews, supervision and support visits by link workers. When we looked at case files we saw that visits from link social workers were regular, supervision records kept and dates of visits recorded. Comprehensive medical assessments were carried out and reviewed appropriately. Adoptive parents were provided with detailed health care information for children and support needs they may require were identified. Children with specific health needs were matched with carers who had the knowledge and skills to meet those needs. When we looked at case files we saw that there were agreements in place and confirmed that a high priority was given to the health needs of looked after children. Healthy life styles were promoted and Highland Council made use of appropriate policies and procedures which ensured the health of children. Adoptive parents had access to training in relation to developing their skills and ability to support children. Since the previous inspection the service had appointed an additional medical advisor with an adult health background to assess, review and advice about prospective and approved carers. This has assisted the paediatric medical advisor. Highland Council supported birth parents and with the help of staff a birth parents was supported to speak at the BAAF national conference. Child Protection documentation was viewed and Highland Council were carrying out referalls in accordance with their policies and procedures. All staff working in the adoption service were trained and skilled in their respective roles and all were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

Areas for Improvement

- The service provider should continue to work on the implementation of the 2007, 2009 Regulations and 2010 guidance.

Grade awarded for this statement

5 - Very Good

Number of Requirements

0

Number of Recommendations

0

Other Information

Complaints

Enforcements

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 the Care Commission 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).

Summary of Grades

Quality of Care and Support - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	5 - Very Good
Statement 3	5 - Very Good
Quality of Staffing - Not Assessed	
Quality of Management and Leadership - Not Assessed	

Inspection and Grading History

Date	Type	Gradings	
16 Dec 2009	Announced	Care and support	6 - Excellent
		Staffing	6 - Excellent
		Management and Leadership	6 - Excellent
9 Oct 2008	Announced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Staffing	5 - Very Good
		Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good

Terms we use in our report and what they mean

Action Plan - When we inspect a service, or investigate a complaint and the inspection report highlights an area for improvement; either through recommendations or requirements, the action plan sets out the actions the service will take in response.

Best practice statements/guidelines - This describes practices that have been shown to work best and to be achievable in specific areas of care. They are intended to guide practice and promote a consistent and cohesive approach to care.

Care Service - A service that provides care and is registered with us.

Complaints - We have a complaints procedure for dealing with any complaint about a registered care service or about us. Anyone can raise a concern with us - people using the service, their family and friends, carers and staff.

We investigate all complaints which can have more than one outcome. Depending on how complex the complaint is, the outcomes can be:

- upheld - where we agree there is a problem to be resolved
- not upheld - where we don't find a problem
- partially upheld - where we agree with some elements of the complaint but not all of them.

Enforcement - To protect people who use care services, the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 gives the Care Commission powers to enforce the law. This means we can vary or impose new conditions of registration, which may restrict how a service operates. We can also serve an improvement notice on a service provider to make them improve their service within a set timescale. If they do not make these improvements we could issue a cancellation notice and cancel their registration.

Disclosure Scotland- Disclosure Scotland provides an accurate and responsive disclosure service to enhance security, public safety and protect the vulnerable in society. There are three types or levels of disclosure (i.e. criminal record check) available from Disclosure Scotland; basic, standard and enhanced. An enhanced check is required for people whose work regularly involves caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children or adults at risk; or to register for child minding, day care and to act as foster parents or carers.

Participation - This describes processes that allow individuals and groups to develop and agree programmes, policy and procedures.

Personal Plan - This is a plan of how support and care will be provided. The plan is agreed between the person using the service (or their representative, or both of them) and the service provider. It is sometimes called a care plan mostly by local authorities or health boards when they commission care for people.

How you can use this report

Our inspection reports give care services detailed information about what they are doing well and not so well. We want them to use our reports to improve the services they provide if they need to.

Care services should share our inspection reports with the people who use their service, their families and carers. They can do this in many ways, for example by discussing with them what they plan to do next or by making sure our report is easily available.

People who use care services, their relatives and carers

We encourage you to read this report and hope that you find the information helpful when making a decision on whether or not to use the care service we have inspected. If you, or a family member or friend, are already using a care service, it is important that you know we have inspected that service and what we found. You may find it helpful to read previous inspection reports about his service.

The Care Commission

We use the information we gather from all our inspections to report to Scottish Ministers on how well Scotland's care services are performing. This information helps us to influence important changes they may make about how care services are provided.

Reader Information

This inspection report is published by the Care Commission. It is for use by the general public. You can get more copies of this report and others by downloading it from our website www.carecommission.com or by telephoning 0845 603 0890.

Translations and alternative formats

This publication is available in other formats and other languages on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

هذه بایتسد یم وونابز رگید روا رولکش رگید رپ شرازگ تعاشا هی

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

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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.

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Improving care in Scotland