

# St. Andrew's Children's Society Adoption Service Adoption Service

7 John's Place  
Leith  
Edinburgh  
EH6 7EL

Telephone: 0131 454 3370

**Type of inspection:**

Announced (short notice)

**Completed on:**

7 February 2020

**Service provided by:**

St. Andrew's Children's Society

**Service provider number:**

SP2003003803

**Service no:**

CS2004080788

## About the service

St. Andrew's Children's Society Adoption Service recruits and supports adoptive parents to provide a family life for children from birth who cannot live within their birth families. The service provides post adoption support including counselling, mediation and direct work with families affected by adoption. The service is based in Leith in Edinburgh and has an office in Aberdeen. It is managed by a director and overseen by service managers.

St. Andrew's Children's Society also operates a fostering service from the same premises. The services share a management structure, staffing, policies, systems and procedures. For the purpose of regulation, we carried out one inspection and reported under each service.

## What people told us

We spoke with five adopters and received seven completed care standards questionnaires from people using the service.

All adopters who contributed to the inspection told us that they thought their supervising social workers were very professional and skilled in their work. Adopters overwhelmingly spoke highly about the support they had received from social workers. Adopters told us they felt confident they would receive ongoing support and that they knew that advice and guidance would be available to them as required. Comments we received included:

'I really appreciate the activities that are put on for parents and children throughout the year.'

'I think St. Andrew's provides an excellent service and I especially want to applaud its approach to encouraging LGBT adopters.'

'I found St. Andrew's responsive and supportive. The approval process and the training is thorough and appropriately challenging.'

'The prep groups were very informative and gave a realistic view of adoption and the challenges which may be faced. During our home study our social worker also prepared us for what to expect. We felt fully supported and no question we asked felt stupid.'

'Training is one of the best parts of the process.'

'I would fully recommend St. Andrew's Children's Society for anyone considering adoption. They are completely supportive and make you feel at ease.'

'We had a very positive experience leading up to the adoption of both our children. Nothing can prepare you for the full change, but I knew I had the connections with St. Andrew's as and when I needed it.'

'I could not have managed the first 6 months without them! They were kind, responsive and supportive and most importantly human in their approach.'

'We have received an excellent service. They keep in touch when needed and we have been well informed throughout.'

'There is always someone to talk to.'

## Self assessment

There was no self assessment requested from the service for this inspection. We met with the managers of the service and reviewed the service development plan and other documentation which informed our assessment of the progress being made.

## From this inspection we graded this service as:

<b>Quality of care and support</b>	5 - Very Good
<b>Quality of staffing</b>	not assessed
<b>Quality of management and leadership</b>	5 - Very Good

## What the service does well

During this inspection, we found that the adoption service recruited and supported prospective adopters very well. Adopters told us that the assessment process had been very thorough. Assessments were comprehensive, evaluative and with a clear analysis of the strengths and abilities of potential adopters to meet the needs of vulnerable children.

Preparation groups provided applicants with detailed information which had supported their understanding of the needs of children requiring adoption and the care and support which would be required.

A range of support groups and networks had been set up for both adopters and their children which were supporting very positive outcomes. In addition, the service had a young people's group which had been successful in ensuring the voice of the young person was heard through the creation of a video and some of these young people took a central role in a presentation to a national conference.

Adoptive families had the opportunity of gaining support from the specific skills of therapeutic workers when required, and we saw clear evidence of this type of support being offered to adopters during the inspection. Input of this type was helping to increase the likelihood of placements having longer term success.

The skills and knowledge of staff were appreciated by adopters, and it was evident that staff brought value to the overall service which was helping to improve outcomes for both adopters and children.

In the cases we tracked, there was evidence of very positive outcomes for children. Adopters told us that they had been given detailed background information in advance, including details about health and birth family history. We saw that, where appropriate, a number of adopters had been supported to meet with birth parents and/or family members. Such meetings were highly valued and adopters we spoke with demonstrated a sound understanding about the benefits of these meetings in terms of helping their child's identity formation.

We observed that the service had in place a robust panel which had consistency of membership and a range of skills and background experience. Panel members provided a high level of quality assurance to the service and they told us that the quality of adoption assessments presented to them helped to make an informed decision.

We saw evidence that children were being provided with nurturing care and that a range of outcomes related to health, education and wellbeing were being significantly improved.

Systems were in place to evidence appropriate checks had been completed prior to an applicant being presented to panel.

Management was described as supportive, approachable and inclusive which was valued and appreciated. We found that regular team meetings were taking place and the staff team felt supported by the provision of development days.

Staff that we spoke with advised us that their line manager within the service was very supportive, reliable and responsive to requests for professional advice or guidance. We saw that staff were receiving regular supervision, however, we felt that there could be greater focus on professional development for staff members. The manager of the service was receptive to this suggestion at feedback and will look to introduce a more structured template.

A safer recruitment exercise of one new worker's file evidenced that safer recruitment practices were being followed with checks conducted before commencing employment.

## What the service could do better

We found that in some of the files we sampled there was no evidence of linking and matching meeting minutes. We asked the service to continue with its efforts to secure these. In addition, we asked that the service continued to pursue Later Life letters for all children given the potential value of these for future identity formation.

## 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](http://www.careinspectorate.com)

## What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

### Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

## What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at or since the last inspection

### Previous recommendations

There are no outstanding recommendations.

## Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
14 Mar 2017	Unannounced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership Not assessed
25 Mar 2015	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 4 - Good
12 Mar 2014	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 5 - Very good
17 Feb 2012	Unannounced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing Not assessed

Date	Type	Gradings	
		Management and leadership	4 - Good
20 Dec 2010	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good Not assessed Not assessed Not assessed
1 Feb 2010	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good Not assessed 4 - Good Not assessed
17 Dec 2008	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good 4 - Good

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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

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