

St. Margaret's Children and Family Care Society Adoption Service

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Glasgow
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Type of inspection: Announced (short notice)
Inspection completed on: 18 August 2017

Service provided by:

St. Margaret's Children and Family Care
Society

Service provider number:

SP2004006765

Care service number:

CS2004075377

About the service

St. Margaret's Children and Family Care Society has been registered with the Care Commission since November 2004, and transferred its registration to the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

St Margaret's is a faith based voluntary agency and registered charity based at Newton Place Glasgow, and service provision is largely focused in the West of Scotland. This includes those living in the Archdiocese of Glasgow, the Diocese of Motherwell, Paisley and Galloway. However, the service will also work with families from outwith these areas. The Council of Management is responsible for the overall management and strategic direction of the Society.

The main work of St. Margaret's Children and Family Care Society is in the recruitment, approval and support of adoptive parents, and origins counselling work with adopted adults and families. A counselling service is also provided for birth parents and families who are considering relinquishing their baby or child for adoption.

Operational management is the responsibility of the Director who is accountable directly to the Council. The main work of St. Margaret's Children and Family Care Society is in the recruitment, and support of adoptive parents and origins counselling work with adopted adults and families.

The adoption agency aims to provide caring families for children in need of adoption irrespective of class, racial origin or creed.

Since the last Inspection twenty one adoptive families had been approved at by the service and twenty-four adoption orders had been granted for children. At the time of the Inspection, twelve applicants were being assessed as potential adopters.

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

What people told us

We met with four children during home visits and spoke with twenty adopters in total. We also had access to very good quality feedback gathered by the service themselves and spoke with placing social workers. All foster adopters we spoke with advised us that they would highly recommend St Margaret's to other individuals who wished to adopt babies and young children.

St Margaret's adoption service regarded the participation and engagement of adopters and prospective adopters as a core value underpinning practice and procedure. This was evident when speaking to adopters and prospective adopters who all shared this view.

The following are some comments:

'ST Margaret's have offered on going support from day one, we are regularly invited to groups and open days and have attended such as book bug, supporting the initial introduction groups and supporting children through loss and trauma. We attend the playgroup weekly at St Margaret's and the support we receive through the staff is outstanding as well as supportive and informative'

'We have had great support from St Margaret's post adoption. This is our second time adopting through this agency. They offer peer support groups, playgroup, play therapy sessions, there is a fully stocked resource library, they have an annual gathering where new and old adopters can meet up, they have a Christmas party for the children, and there is always someone at the end of the phone if you need someone to talk too. Fantastic support'

'Excellent post adoption support. Assessment process was positive, quick and flexible around our work schedules. Overall excellent service - no complaints'

'We see St Margaret's as being part of our extended family; their approach is excellent they are professional and non-judgmental. We are confident in both staff and management, they are a realistic and honest agency'

'I can't speak highly enough about St Margaret's, we are very involved and active even years later and have been asked to become ambassadors for the service'

Feedback from relatives training:

'I feel much more informed, this was a very enjoyable experience it was informative, and most of all the meeting was relaxed and comfortable and in no way made me feel inadequate, no question was a stupid question'

'A very worthwhile exercise, genuine people offering genuine support throughout the whole process and beyond - very heartening'

'I learned about the ways in which I can offer my family member help with building attachments as new adoptive parents, I am excited and can't wait to meet our new family member'

'I found the speaker well prepared and helpful, it gave me a lot to think about and how the child will be feeling'

'It was good to be able to ask my own questions and this will enable me to help my relative who is adopting'

As the findings of this inspection are based on a sample of children and young people, Inspectors cannot assure the quality of experience for every single child receiving a service.

Self assessment

The service provided us with their service development plan for 2015 -2018 for this Inspection. The overall business plan outlined the direction and future objectives of the organisation. Staff and adopters confirmed they had been given opportunities to contribute to this.

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	not assessed

What the service does well

Based on our Inspection findings, we concluded that St Margaret's Children and Family Care Society are an exceptional adoption agency. A significant strength was the outstanding support provided to adoptive families from initial enquiry through to post adoption services. This was wide ranging, of a high quality, delivered tirelessly and professionally and very well received by those who use the service.

St Margaret's had expanded and strengthened their EPASS (Extended post adoption support service) since the last Inspection. As a result adopters, children and young people benefited from the improved provision of on going and additional services that helped to promote very good outcomes.

Examples included:

The extremely successful playgroup continued to develop and gave new adopters, and their children, an opportunity to socialise in a setting where the adults had a shared understanding of each other's situation. The addition of a play therapist within this group was greatly appreciated by adopters, and was viewed as instrumental in helping raise awareness in terms of the bonding process.

The service had strengthened their nursery and schools training, to include a wider audience of nursery and teaching staff. The service alerted the catchment school for every child that was now placed with St Margaret's adopters. Since the last Inspection 103 education staff had been trained in attachment awareness aimed at helping schools to recognise some of the issues involved in adoption. This had already begun to help teachers to support pupils and parents, and as a consequence improve attainment, behaviour and overall well being for children.

Teachers commented:

'I feel more confident in effectively supporting the pupils and parents in my school'

'I am now more consistent and deliver consequences in my class with empathy'

The return referral group, which was well established, and continued to meet on a monthly basis. This was an excellent example of an early intervention strategy to target potential vulnerabilities and provide a responsive and appropriate service. As a response to referrals, the service had identified that there was a clear need to develop further provision for older adopted children and a 'Teen Group' had been introduced. The group was designed to improve young people's self-confidence and reduce their sense of isolation by providing creative and inspiring group activities. The direction of the group was shaped by the young people themselves, who collaborated closely with staff. In future, the group will focus on key issues that can affect adopted children, such as identity formation during adolescence and keeping safe on social media. This type of initiative helps young people to have a strong sense of belonging, a positive sense of self and helps to shape and influence future service delivery from their unique perspective.

A parent commented:

'At the group my son finds a place where he can talk openly and honestly about the issues which are important to him, especially in relation to his experience of being adopted and all that brings, with no fear of being misunderstood'

Music therapy for children and parent/child massage were also new developments since the last Inspection, and were highly valued by adopters who informed us of the benefits of such approaches for their children. St Margaret's fully acknowledged that high levels of therapeutic support are integral to helping children recover from adversity and negative life experiences.

Putting this theory into practice can be challenging at times, however we were extremely encouraged to find that this ethos informed all aspects of the services' work practice. As a result, we identified some excellent outcomes for children including, siblings being reunited through adoption and making very good progress in terms of their health and emotional wellbeing. Children we observed during home visits were in stable, nurturing homes and experiencing caring, warm secure relationships.

The excellent outcomes we identified for children and young people were also achieved within the context of a high level of support provided to and adopters. Adopters spoke very highly of the staff team that supported them, and staff presented to us as exceptionally well qualified, experienced in all areas of adoption and as highly motivated individuals who appreciated managerial support.

Staff visit adopters regularly pre and post adoption, and in particular once a child had been matched and placed when a high level of support is required. Communication was very good and all adopters advised us that they felt they could call the service at any time. Beyond the allocated worker people informed us that they knew all members of the team equally including managers and the Director and would have no hesitation making contact. Testament to the staff group was the fact that adopters and children felt 'fully connected' to the service and continued to attend activity days, peer support groups and also seek out support years after adoption had been concluded. This had multiple benefits including long term adopters linking with prospective or newly approved adopters to share experiences regarding the rewards and challenges of the adoption process.

Assessments and case notes in the files we examined were of a very high quality. Form F's (The assessment tool used to assess prospective adopters) were extremely well written, evaluative and considered in their conclusions. All necessary statutory checks were carried out to ensure the safety of children, and we welcomed the addition of social media checks. If required, an independent psychotherapist was available to clarify or give opinion on any concerns raised during the assessment process. Panel members informed us that the high quality of adoption assessments presented to them helped to inform their decision making processes.

Staff members commented:

'The service is very responsive and needs led, there is a sense of family although we maintain professional relationships and do not over identify with the people we work with'

'It is a privilege' to work for St Margaret's they are an inclusive child centred organisation'

'My experience of Induction was very good, shadowing panels and workers, I felt that I had a good experience and learned about the core values of St Margaret and what was expected of me'

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 the children's social workers who confirmed the professional approach:

'The adopters were very well supported by St Margaret's through tough times, and have benefited greatly from this'

'The form F's were excellent, I enjoyed reading them and get a sense that this link could work right away, I felt I knew a lot about them and got a good sense of their history'

'St Margaret's are an approachable and organised service, and I was guided by the social worker and he was a great help to me personally'

Morale within the staff team was reported as very good, and excellent access to training helped underpin their theoretical work. Staff felt valued and listened to, and appreciated the opportunities to engage in peer supervision where practice concerns or improvements to service could be discussed and shared. Developmental feedback was emphasised and self directed learning and evaluation encouraged. This approach to supervision adds another level of professional accountability and in turn improves service delivery.

The service's development plan was dynamic and evidenced a strong commitment to on-going improvement and it was clear that the service had expanded meaningfully since the last Inspection. Further improvements had been identified based on adopters and young people feedback. Examples included, the development of an adopters ambassador's group and a fourth day being added to preparation groups to focus on wellbeing and self-care. The service is extremely well placed to build on these areas of strength and we will look at these during the next service Inspection.

What the service could do better

We identified some areas for improvement, including some raised by the service themselves during the inspection. We discussed these more fully at feedback with the Director who demonstrated commitment to act promptly on areas identified. These areas for improvement do not call into question the overall excellent grades the service had received for this Inspection.

The service intends to establish a process to trigger follow up checks once health and safety household documents have been completed at the assessment stage. This will enable areas that required action to be rectified within a set timescale.

Annual appraisals for members of staff and supervision templates will be reviewed by the service in the near future. The service is aware that these need to be outcomes focused, include a balance between reflection and operational tasks and be completed collaboratively. We will look at this area during the next service Inspection.

The service are currently exploring options to establish a further support group for fathers of adopted children. In addition they are also considering the possibility of holding mobile support groups outwith central Glasgow.

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
6 Oct 2015	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 6 - Excellent Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 6 - Excellent
24 Oct 2014	Announced	Care and support 6 - Excellent Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 5 - Very good
9 Oct 2013	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 5 - Very good
3 Aug 2012	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 5 - Very good
4 Feb 2011	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing Not assessed Management and leadership Not assessed
29 Mar 2010	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 4 - Good Management and leadership Not assessed
4 Mar 2009	Announced	Care and support 4 - Good

Date	Type	Gradings	
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and leadership	4 - Good

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