

# Families for Children Adoption Agency

Families for Children Trust

Higher Mill, Buckfast, Buckfastleigh, Devon TQ11 0EE

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this voluntary adoption agency

Families for Children was established in 1993 as a joint venture between Exeter Diocese Board for Christian Care and Plymouth Diocesan Catholic Children's Society. In January 2003, the agency became a separate registered charity.

The agency offers a range of domestic adoption services to people who live in the counties of Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Cornwall, and in the Isles of Scilly. The agency places children from all over Great Britain. It specialises in older children, those with complex needs and groups of brothers and sisters.

The manager has been in post and registered with Ofsted since April 2020.

### Inspection dates: 10 to 14 January 2022

**Overall experiences and progress of service users, taking into account** **Good**

How well children, young people and adults are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Good**

The voluntary adoption agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of previous inspection:** 26 February 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of service users: good**

The agency identifies and meets the needs of those children and who have the most complex needs. Most notably, these include sibling groups, school age children and children who have additional needs arising from learning or physical disability, and children with emotional or behavioural needs.

Children make progress because they live with adoptive parents who provide loving, stable and secure homes. The inspectors learned of the progress that children make from conversations with professionals and the adoptive parents. Leaders and managers recognised they could improve how they capture and evidence this progress better.

The agency provides a quality service that includes the assessment of prospective adopters, supporting adopters to make a link, matching and placing children and supporting families post adoption. Adopters that contributed to the inspection were mixed in their views of the support they had received over the previous 18 months. Nonetheless, despite the challenges the agency has faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, adoptive families are supported by social workers and family support workers who meet regularly with them.

In the main, records are comprehensive and detailed, and prospective adopters' reports summarise well the information collected during the adoption assessment process. The inspectors captured positive views of the support that adopters receive during this process. However, a small number of reports scrutinised by the inspectors fell short of personalising the support the adopter may need in the future.

Adopters interviewed spoke highly of the relationship they had with their allocated social worker. Although some adopters had experienced a change of worker, sometimes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, adopters continued to praise the staff they had met. From the first phone call to present day, adopters found staff to be professional and kind.

### **How well children, young people and adults are helped and protected: good**

The assessment of prospective adopters includes enquiries into their histories and backgrounds, which includes contact with former partners who have experience of their ability to safely care for children. The agency applies sufficient rigour when obtaining checks for prospective adopters who have worked overseas.

The adoption panel focuses on safeguarding concerns in its deliberations on approval. All social workers and panel members on the central list are trained in safeguarding, and this training is updated annually.

Adoption arrangements are stable. In the cases since the last inspection where there has been an adoption disruption, the lessons learned have been used to effectively improve practice.

A key area of the preparation course for adopters is safeguarding children. This includes adopters developing an awareness of the risks posed by social media, the action to be taken when children go missing, and the risk of sexual exploitation. The preparation course also explains to adopters the potential impact of abuse on the behaviour of children and young people.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

Since the previous inspection in March 2018, there have been changes to the senior leadership team. Despite these changes and the challenges that the agency has encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has continued to deliver a service that is in line with its statement of purpose. This is because the agency has adapted to delivering several of its services virtually and, when necessary, it has adjusted its workforce in recognition of demand.

The staff team is dedicated, committed and highly skilled. It has continued in the face of many challenges to place the children and adopters central to its practice. While some staff have felt challenged by the change to how they practise, the inspectors received feedback from the staff that was in the main very positive. Staff spoke well of the support and flexibility they have received from their immediate line managers. This includes receiving regular supervision and appraisals.

Leaders and managers have a presence across several adoption forums, and this enables them to remain up to date with the changing profile of adoption. They use monitoring tools to produce quality reports for their board and trustees. While several recording and reporting systems remain in their infancy, for example capturing the progress children make and the quality and effectiveness of supervision, there is a clear strategy of how the agency will maintain stability and growth going forward.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003, the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005, any other relevant legislation, and the national minimum standards.

## **Voluntary adoption agency details**

**Unique reference number:** SC049026

**Registered provider:** Families for Children Trust

**Registered provider address:** Higher Mill, Buckfast, Buckfastleigh, Devon TQ11 0EE

**Responsible individual:** Ruth Marriott

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## **Inspectors**

Linda Bond, Social Care Inspector

Katie Ratcliffe, Social Care Inspector

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