

# Adoption UK

Adoption UK Charity

Bloxham Mill, Barford Road, Bloxham, Banbury OX15 4FF

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this adoption support agency

Adoption UK is a registered charity that provides United Kingdom-wide adoption support services for adults. This inspection considered the registered service that operates in England. The service registered with Ofsted on 24 June 2020.

The agency provides a range of adoption support services to adults through a combination of open access, membership and commissioned services. These include advice and guidance, resources and training, mentoring as well as specialist psychological and education support.

The registered manager left their post on 30 June 2022. There is an agency manager in post. She has applied to Ofsted to register, and her application is being processed.

### Inspection dates: 17 and 19 January 2023

**Overall experience 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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

**Date of last inspection:** not applicable

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** not applicable

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** not applicable

## Inspection judgement

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

The services provided by the adoption support agency have a significant impact on the lives of the prospective adopters and adopters that they work with. Prospective adopters and adopters are positive about the service that they receive. One adopter told the inspectors, 'They are clearly passionate about their work and go the extra mile to ensure we adopters are supported and well-informed, so that we can hold our children's needs at the forefront of all our decisions and actions.'

Staff and volunteers are a highly committed team. One member of staff described working with prospective adopters and adopters as a 'privilege'. Many of the staff and volunteers have been impacted by adoption. This is particularly evident in the mentor and parent-partner roles. These roles are a strength of the service, providing individualised advice and guidance to prospective adopters and adopters. This lived experience of adoption is highly valued by the people they work with. By sharing their experiences, mentors and parent partners have enabled prospective adopters and adopters to reflect on their views and make informed choices during their own adoption journey.

The agency has an in-house team of clinicians. Their valuable insight and input helps staff, mentors and adopters to understand and respond to the impact of trauma in childhood. The recent development of the PATH programme uses this specialist knowledge. The programme provides a flexible and individual programme of psychological support for adoptive parents, aimed at stabilising family life.

Managers recognise the importance of adopter engagement in the organisation. Adopters and their families can access a range of activities including days out and local events. These experiences promote supportive, social links for adoptive families, where adopters feel accepted. One adopter told the inspector, 'It was good to be in a situation where trauma-linked behaviour didn't cause stares of horror.'

Managers are creative in how they respond to the changing needs of the adoption sector. Managers acted quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic, moving many of their services online. This ensured that prospective adopters and adopters felt supported during this critical time. Managers developed services in response to the pandemic that have been retained and now benefit other adopters. For example, a service to support adoptive parents to manage children's return to school after the pandemic has been expanded to offer adopters support and advice about all elements of their child's education. This is giving adoptive parents the knowledge and confidence to advocate for their children.

Managers have firmly established the charity in the wider adoption sector. The charity has published resources and research relating to all aspects of adoption. Managers are keen to ensure that practice responds to developments in adoption. For example, managers have developed projects relating to Foetal Alcohol Spectrum

Disorder and sensory attachment practice. Through projects such as Adopter Voice and the Adoption Barometer Report, managers ensure that the adopter's views are at the heart of decision-making.

Historically, the agency has focused primarily on work with adoptive parents and prospective adopters. The agency is in the process of developing its support services for adopted adults. This is very much in its infancy and, as yet, the impact is untested.

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

Staff and volunteers use trauma-informed practice and therapeutic parenting techniques to help adoptive parents to understand the lifelong impact of trauma for their children and their family. This enables staff to equip adopters to respond to their child's changing needs.

Staff, volunteers, prospective adopters and adopters have access to a wide range of training and resources that enable them to understand risk. This ensures that emerging patterns of concern are identified and responded to.

There are clear processes in place for staff to follow if they are concerned about a child or a family. This includes an out-of-hours safeguarding system for staff. This ensures that there is always readily accessible management support for staff. However, despite these systems and supports, on one occasion there was a delay in a member of staff reporting a concern. When this delay was identified it was not clear that managers had ensured that the member of staff had undertaken additional training in response to this. On this occasion, the impact of the omission was low.

Managers have made significant improvements to their systems for recruiting and vetting staff and volunteers. This ensures that managers have clear oversight of the checks required before staff can start work.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

The service has undergone a significant change in senior leadership in the past year. Currently, there is an acting agency manager in post. The chief executive officer joined the service in October and plans to assume the role of responsible individual. In addition, the service has undergone a significant review and restructure, which has resulted in some elements of service delivery move from England focused, to UK wide. This process is still ongoing. The new chief executive officer has vision and is ambitious about what can be achieved with the service.

However, historic systems and processes impact the ability of managers to maintain clear monitoring and oversight of all elements of the agency. For example, it is not easily identifiable when staff are overdue safeguarding training.

In addition, the quality and content of records is inconsistent. It is not always clear how the needs of prospective adopters and adopters are assessed or how decisions about the allocation of services are made. Where services have been provided, there is a lack of consistent evaluation of the outcomes. This limits managers' understanding of the impact of the agency.

There are clear systems of induction and appraisal for staff. Staff have access to regular team meetings and group forums, which they value highly. This includes both clinical and practice-based supervision. Records of supervision meetings are inconsistent in quality and content. This reduces their use as a record of staff workload or personal development.

The acting manager provides a quarterly monitoring report to the charity's board. The use of cut and paste in this report significantly reduces its use as an accurate and up-to-date overview of the service.

The senior leadership team is aware of many of the improvements required within the service. The team has in place a number of short and long-term plans to address these matters and to achieve sustainable service improvement.

## What does the adoption support agency need to do to improve?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person/s must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person and the responsible individual (if any) shall, having regard to the size of the agency, the statement of purpose and the number and needs of those receiving adoption support services from the agency, carry on or (as the case may be) manage the agency with sufficient care, competence and skill.</p> <p>The Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005, regulation 10 (1)</p> <p>In particular, this relates to leaders and managers ensuring that the reporting and monitoring systems used within the agency provide managers with the necessary oversight to enable them to manage the service effectively and in line with regulations.</p> <p>In particular, this relates to leaders and managers ensuring that agency records are consistent in quality and content and provide clear evidence of management oversight and decision-making.</p> <p>In particular, this relates to leaders and managers ensuring that records of staff supervision contain sufficient detail and reflect all aspects of staff development and practice.</p> <p>In particular, this relates to leaders and managers ensuring that reports produced under National Minimum Standard 25 are sufficiently individualised and provide the required information about all elements of the service.</p>	<p>28 April 2023</p>

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, young people and adults, using the social care common inspection framework.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the adoption support agency, how it meets the core functions as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005 and the national minimum standards.

## **Adoption support agency details**

**Unique reference number:** 2590738

**Registered provider:** Adoption UK

**Registered provider address:** Bloxham Mill, Barford Road, Bloxham, Banbury  
OX15 4FF

**Responsible individual:** William Joel Sadler

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

**Telephone number:** 01295 752240

**Email address:** [emily.frith@adoptionuk.org.uk](mailto:emily.frith@adoptionuk.org.uk)

### **Inspectors**

Tracey Coglan Greig, Social Care Inspector  
Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector

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