

# Parents and Children Together - Reading Office

Oxford Diocese for Social Work Incorporated (PACT)

PACT, 7 Southern Court, South Street, Reading RG1 4QS

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this voluntary adoption agency**

The agency's statement of purpose states that Parents and Children Together (PACT), also known as Oxford Diocesan Council for Social Work Inc, is a voluntary adoption agency and restricted to providing domestic adoption, therapeutic support and post-adoption services.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in March 2021.

### **Inspection dates: 13 to 17 March 2023**

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The voluntary adoption agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the voluntary adoption agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children, young people and adults.

**Date of last inspection:** 20 March 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

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

The skilled, highly qualified and stable staff team, along with experienced and loving adoptive parents, ensure that placement stability is maintained in all but a few of the adoption placements. As a result of the continuing support they receive, children placed with adopters assessed and approved by PACT make impressive and sustained progress.

Adopters talked of their experiences of being assessed and matched with children. They were extremely complimentary and remarked on the significant impact PACT has made on their lives. All adopters spoke positively of the support and training they have received from PACT. They remarked on the sensitivity and kind approach of the adoption social workers throughout their adoption journey. In particular, they spoke about the online platform CATCH (Children and Trauma Community Hub) that provides an invaluable amount of research-based information, resources, education and training. This resource is accessed widely by all who express an interest in adoption and by adoptive parents.

The agency is a strong advocate for the needs of children and adopters. There are particularly strong links between schools and the qualified education professionals in the agency. The work with the education professional has supported some children who are struggling to remain at their school, when this might otherwise have proved impossible. Bespoke packages of support informed by the agency's therapeutic model and current research results in adopters being better informed, and children making significant progress in all aspects of their lives.

The quality of the individualised support provided by the agency is excellent. The agency provides high-quality and effective therapy. It offers creative and innovative therapeutic interventions to adopted children and their families. As a result, children make significant progress, family relationships are strengthened, and adoption breakdowns have been prevented in all but three cases.

The agency is fully inclusive. They consult with adopters at every point and, where appropriate, children. They act on their comments and tailor the support they provide to meet changing needs. Application to the adoption support fund is made in a timely manner and is responsive to the needs of the adopters and children.

Adopters are supported and prepared by a team of qualified practitioners, people who have lived experience of fostering and adoption and some who bring further complementary skills and expertise to the role.

Relationship-building at the point of a person expressing an interest in adoption is a key strength of the agency. In doing so, the team can better support enquiries, help people to make the right decision and understand the adoption landscape.

Inspectors found records capturing visits and the discussions that take place between adoption social workers and adopters are of an exemplary standard.

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

The registered manager and responsible individual have an excellent understanding of how children's previous experiences of trauma can affect their behaviours. Their expertise in the field has ensured that safeguarding remains central to the agency's ethos.

Assessments of adopters and the matching of children are of a high quality. An impressive amount of safeguarding training and information is readily available to all who show an interest in adoption and those who are approved to adopt. Adopters told inspectors that they found this invaluable, not just for now, but as their child becomes more independent.

Disruptions to placements are rare, and records capture the support that the agency provides to guard against these. External professionals told inspectors that in one case where there was a disruption, the agency was extremely proactive and responsive to the needs of the child. Senior leaders and managers take seriously the impact of disruptions and learning from this has been identified and actioned.

The systems in place to report and share concerns are robust. The inspectors found a vast amount of evidence demonstrating management oversight when there is a concern. Root and branch analysis takes place following all serious incidents and learning is identified and actioned swiftly. There is sound evidence of the positive impact of challenge and escalation. Professionals were overwhelmingly positive about the practice of the agency when promoting the safety of children living with adopters.

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

The quality and effectiveness of this agency have remained consistently high since the previous inspection. Applicants, adopters, and staff make excellent use of published research. As a result, children are matched well, and they make sustained progress in their overall development.

Leaders, managers, and key staff share their learning beyond the agency. The registered manager and responsible individual take part in a number of high-profile adoption and safeguarding forums. Because of this, their practice remains current and informed by research, and is further disseminated to those who work in the field of adoption. This means that they are playing a vital role in informing the outcomes of children placed for adoption.

Along with other statutory and voluntary partners, the agency has proactively worked alongside two voluntary adoption agencies to support them in their process of closure. In doing so, adopters and children have been protected from any impact.

The agency is highly committed to helping children and adopters. Through exceptionally enduring professional relationships, the agency supports children, adopters and members of birth families under extreme stress to stay together. Feedback from professionals is extremely positive. They hold the agency in very high regard and comment on the positive outcomes that are achieved for children and families. They specifically value the accessibility of the registered manager and, in particular, the swiftness of her response to supporting the children who are living with adopters a distance from their placing authority.

The chair of the adoption panel spoke highly of the quality of reports and the quality assurance process. As a result of the agency's approach to embracing difference, placement matches are strong. All agency staff have an excellent understanding of the needs of each of the children and adopters. The diversity of the staff team and panel members makes them extremely good at identifying the needs of the children and matching with adopters.

Leaders and managers make exceptionally good use of clinical supervision from highly qualified professionals. This enhances their practice skills to better support their staff, children and adopters. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support that they receive from their managers and say their visibility and presence is supportive. They are provided with direction and guidance that is informed and rooted in research and practice.

The registered manager strives to continually improve the agency. As a direct result of her skills, knowledge and experience in the field of adoption, and with the support of an extremely skilled responsible individual, the agency continues to develop while maintaining an extremely high-quality service.

## **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:** SC049093

**Registered provider:** Oxford Diocese for Social Work Incorporated (PACT)

**Registered provider address:** PACT, 7 Southern Court, South Street, Reading RG1 4QS

**Responsible individual:** Lorna Hunt

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## **Inspectors**

Linda Bond, Social Care Inspector

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector

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