

Adoption for Bradford, Bradford Children's and Families Trust

Bradford Children and Families Trust

Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Sir Henry Mitchell House, 4 Manchester Road, Bradford BD5 0QL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this voluntary adoption agency

Bradford Children's and Families Trust (the Trust) is a community interest company limited by guarantee and wholly owned by Bradford Council to deliver children's social care services within Bradford Metropolitan District. Adoption for Bradford (the agency) is a voluntary adoption agency which sits within the Trust. Some elements of the adoption service are undertaken by a regional adoption agency, specifically the recruitment and assessment of adopters, adoption panel, family finding and post-adoption support. Other elements of the adoption process, such as the completion of child permanence reports, are undertaken by social work teams from Bradford Children's and Families Trust.

The agency is responsible for:

- Permanence planning, including the early identification and tracking of a child requiring adoption, providing support to social work teams on the adoption process, the preparation of child permanence reports and agency decision-making for 'should be placed for adoption' decisions.
- Matching and placement, including visiting potential families, agency decision-making for matching prospective adopters and child, placement planning, adoption support planning, life-story work and independent reviewing of the child's plan as well as agreement to lodge an adoption application.
- Adoption support, including the assessment and administration of financial support, including adoption allowances.

This was the agency's first inspection since it was registered with Ofsted in April 2023.

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 January 2024

Overall experiences and progress of service users, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

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

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The voluntary adoption agency is not yet delivering good help and care for children, young people and adults. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: not previously inspected

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of service users: requires improvement to be good

The agency works closely with the regional adoption agency to find families who can meet children's needs for permanence through adoption. For children with more complex needs, leaders make prompt decisions together with the regional adoption agency to widen the family finding search. This prevents delay for children.

Children are well matched to their prospective adopters. Children are flourishing because of the love and consistency in care they receive from their adopters. Adopters maintain important relationships for children, including with birth families and their former foster carers.

Some children experience delay during the adoption process. Children consequently meet more professionals than necessary because of repeated adoption medicals or through changes of social workers. Their family time is also extended because permanency plans are not confirmed. This delay is unsettling for children.

While this delay is primarily linked to care planning legacy, some prospective adopters continue to experience delay in the final stages before lodging an adoption order application. Arrangements for securing financial support or the provision of important documents, including passports and children's life-story books, have led to drift. Prospective adopters feel confused, frustrated and anxious during a time which is already stressful.

The universal adoption support offer is good. Social workers generally clearly set out what support will be provided when children move into their adoptive families. However, leaders do not challenge social workers or the regional adoption agency effectively when children have to wait before receiving post-adoption support. Some adopters have complained that children have not received their life-story books within the agreed time frame. Not all children and their adopters are therefore receiving the right help at the right time.

How well children, young people and adults are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Leaders have overseen appropriate checks to ensure that the manager has been safely recruited to work within the agency.

The agency has not notified Ofsted of any serious safeguarding concerns.

Children's immediate and long-term needs are risk assessed and considered with sufficient scrutiny during the multi-agency 'should be placed for adoption' meeting. The agency decision-maker takes her role seriously and only reaches a decision for children when all relevant reports and views have been considered. If the agency

decision-maker defers, she convenes a follow-up meeting in a timely way. This helps to reduce unnecessary delay for children.

Children's transitions to their adoptive families are carefully managed. This reduces the risk of disruption for children. 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.

Leaders acknowledge that social workers require support to become more skilled in adoption work. They provide social workers with sensitive feedback to support their professional development. Social workers have access to the regional adoption agency for training, in particular with the writing of child permanence reports. Not all managers of social work teams have accepted this offer. The quality of child permanence reports remains inconsistent. Not all children therefore receive important information about their identities from their child permanence reports. This does not help them to fully understand their histories in later life.

Leaders do not assure themselves that the regional adoption agency has risk assessed children on a waiting list for post-adoption support. Therefore, leaders do not fully understand children's experiences and if they should prioritise help to prevent adoption disruption.

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

The agency is located within suitable office accommodation used by the Trust. This supports the agency's responsible individual and manager to engage with Trust social workers and leaders. The agency is co-located with Trust corporate services, including HR, finance and legal services, which further enhances partnership working.

The responsible individual is suitably qualified and experienced for the role. She challenges decisions and is child-focused in her attempts to make the best decisions for children. The responsible individual uses learning and peer-networking opportunities to influence her practice.

There has been a change of manager since the agency was registered in April 2023. The newly appointed manager is appropriately qualified, skilled and experienced. She has the benefit of an existing working relationship with the regional adoption agency.

The statement of purpose is current and accurately reflects the work of the agency. It contains relevant points of contact and is accessible to the public via the Trust's website.

Leaders are ambitious and demonstrate a vision for the agency. This includes the development of specialist adoption workers sitting alongside social workers to improve adoption preparation work and the identification of post-adoption support

needs. Leaders do not yet have clear timescales to assist them in the implementation of the business plan. This plan therefore has the potential to drift.

Leaders have established tracking tools to monitor the progression of children awaiting adoption. While this holds social workers to account, it does not always record reasons for, or sufficiently challenge, drift in children's plans.

Leaders meet regularly with the regional adoption agency, and working relationships are well developed. Leaders are in the early stages of establishing governance and oversight of the service they commission from the regional adoption agency. Currently, leaders are focused on data and compliance activity. Leaders do not seek independent feedback from adopters and children. The agency does not therefore sufficiently understand the lived experiences of adopters and children.

The agency does not have effective oversight to assure itself of the quality of work it commissions from the regional adoption agency. Leaders do not routinely have information about Bradford children who have been referred to the regional adoption agency for post-adoption support. Leaders are not sufficiently assuring themselves that children are assessed so that their needs are fully understood, or that they are receiving the right post-adoption support at the right time.

What does the voluntary adoption 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 Voluntary Adoption Agencies and The Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003, The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 or any other relevant legislation, and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered provider, the manager, and the branch manager (if any) shall, having regard to—</p> <p>the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who may be, or have been, placed for adoption by the agency,</p> <p>carry on or manage the agency or (as the case may be) branch, with sufficient care, competence and skill. (‘The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations’, 2003, Regulation 8 (1)(b))</p> <p>This relates to understanding, scrutinising and challenging the adoption process and post-adoption experience for children and their adopters.</p>	<p>1 April 2024</p>

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: 2730622

Registered provider: Bradford Children and Families Trust

Registered provider address: Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Sir Henry Mitchell House, 4 Manchester Road, Bradford BD5 0QL

Responsible individual: Amandip Johal

Telephone number: 07773248040

Email address: amandip.johal@bradford.gov.uk

Inspectors

Joanna Warburton, Social Care Inspector
Evelyn Chafota, Social Care Inspector

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