

Perth & Kinross Council - Adoption Service Adoption Service

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Perth & Kinross Council

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About the service

Perth and Kinross Council Adoption Agency provides a service for children and young people, aged from birth to 18 years, and their families who are assessed as in need of this service. The agency aims to recruit and support adoptive parents to provide families for those children who cannot live with their birth parents or extended family members and whose needs have been assessed.

Since the last inspection (2017) Perth and Kinross have continued to recruit adopters and significantly invest in developing a concurrency scheme. This meant that children could be placed directly with caregivers who could go on to adopt the child. The service has successfully utilised interim court measures to secure children in such placements.

Perth and Kinross Adoption Agency has developed a unique and supportive team structure, specialising in permanency and adoption work. They work closely with other Perth and Kinross Agency teams and take a multi-agency approach to assessing and meeting the needs of children in their care.

As the findings in 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.

Perth and Kinross Council Adoption Agency has been registered with the Care Inspectorate since the Care Inspectorate was formed in 2011. It was previously registered with the Care Commission.

What people told us

- Children experienced meaningful and trusting relationships and lived in stable and predictable home environments.
- Children were supported to maintain meaningful relationships with extended family members, and significant birth family members.
- Caregivers provided nurturing, trauma informed care, supported by staff who were skilled, knowledgeable, and responsive.
- Staff's knowledge of children and their needs enhanced their ability to 'match' them with potential adopters.
- Children's experiences and the potential impact this would have on their development and future needs was fully explored with caregivers.
- Children's placement moves prioritised them and their needs and were progressed at a pace they were comfortable with.
- Regular children's reviews ensured that children's holistic needs were regularly reviewed and updated within a multi-agency forum.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support people's wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question very good as the service demonstrated major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children. There were very few areas for improvement. Those that did exist would have minimal adverse impact on children's experiences and outcomes. Opportunities were taken to strive for excellence within a culture of learning, development and continuous improvement.

Children enjoyed warm, affectionate and trusting relationships with their caregivers and extended family members, promoting a sense of belonging and security. One caregiver said, "My child slots into our family and is cared for as if they were a birth child." Caregivers were aware of the impact of trauma on children's

development and cared for them in a way that was sensitive to their needs. One caregiver explained being patient when providing a child with instructions, aware they need additional time to process information.

Placement stability and continuity of relationships for children was a re-occurring theme throughout our inspection. Where permanence plans identified adoption, children were legally secured with matched caregivers in adoptive placements, where they could remain whilst the legal process of an adoption order was finalised. Although we could identify delays in permanency planning processes, this meant that children could develop meaningful relationships with their 'forever family' and wider community members and resources, without the prospect of a further move. Promotion of continued relationships with brothers and sisters, where appropriate, was evident as was a drive to support birth parents to engage, or re-engage, with information exchange agreements. Due to the unique structure of the team, staff remained allocated and available to children and caregivers throughout the adoption journey. Caregivers we spoke to valued staff knowledge, skills, commitment and responsiveness. One survey response reported, "Staff are approachable, honest and knowledgeable." We were encouraged to hear the level of emotional support caregivers experienced from staff, when there were delays in progressing children's plans.

Guidance on linking, matching, and transitions for children had been updated and shared across the organisation and other services. This was informed from caregiver's experiences, learning from an upheld complaint and research surrounding good practice. Staff knowledge of a child and good levels of communication were quoted by caregivers as factors in successful matching and transitions. We were impressed with the level of information shared with prospective caregivers at 'Information Day' events. Weight given to existing relationships was raised as a potential issue in placement matching, with the suggestion of greater clarity in matching documentation to identify strengths and vulnerabilities and a support plan to address risks. Caregivers spoke about placement moves being carefully thought through, keeping the child's needs in focus and planned at a pace that was comfortable to the child.

How well is our care and support planned?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question good as there were several important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement. The strengths had a significant positive impact on children's experiences and outcomes. However, improvements are required to maximise wellbeing and ensure that children consistently have experiences and outcomes which are as positive as possible.

Child and caregiver assessments were completed timeously and were at a good standard, which included both narrative accounts and an evaluation of strengths and vulnerabilities. Regular, multi-agency reviews ensured planning for children was updated and looked holistically at the child's current and future needs. Safe care practices were supported by a safer caring profile, however there was an absence of child specific risk assessments and safe caring plans. We felt that undertaking risk assessments to influence individualised safe caring plans would assist in a greater understanding of the child's needs whilst promoting transparency and accountability in decision making. This information could also provide greater clarity in matching documentation and support plans, as mentioned in Key Question 1.

Post adoption support was previously identified as an area the service could improve upon and it is included in the service development plan. During our inspection management, staff and caregivers confirmed post adoption support is a gap in service provision. Now that Covid-19 restrictions have been relaxed, we are confident the service will explore how this area of improvement could be developed and implemented.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

Management systems should be developed to provide a wider management overview of quality and key events within the service. Specifically a system of file auditing should be developed as well as central records for child/adult protection allegations.

This area for improvement was made on 4 October 2017.

Action taken since then

File audit system in place and central records for allegations against carers kept. Service needs to keep central child protection records for children in the service and this has been discussed with the service during the inspection.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families experience compassion, dignity and respect	5 - Very Good
1.2 Children, young people and adults get the most out of life	5 - Very Good
1.3 Children, young people and adults' health and wellbeing benefits from the care and support they experience	5 - Very Good
1.4 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families get the service that is right for them	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	4 - Good
5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects the outcomes and wishes of children, young people and adults	4 - Good

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