

Inspection Report

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative

This document is also available in Welsh.
Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Cymraeg.

OGL © Hawlfraint y Goron 2026 WG54216 ISBN 978-1-83745-193-7

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspected Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) between 1 and 5 December 2025.
- 1.2 Care Inspectorate Wales reviews local authority social services functions, including functions in relation to adoption, on behalf of Welsh Ministers in accordance with Section 149B of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
- 1.3 The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015, places statutory duties on local authorities to work collaboratively with each other. The primary purpose of these directions is to ensure that effective joint arrangements are in place between local authorities, to ensure consistent and effective adoption services across Wales. Regional Adoption Services form part of a three-tier structure to provide the National Adoption Service (NAS).
- 1.4 The VVC Regional Adoption Collaborative comprises the following local authorities, Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taff. The Vale of Glamorgan local authority is the host local authority for this region.
- 1.5 The inspection focussed on how the service promotes the well-being and safety of children through the provision of permanency with adoptive families, who can safely meet their needs and improve the likelihood of them achieving the best possible outcomes. We evaluated the leadership and governance arrangements that support service delivery, and how effective it is in achieving quality outcomes for children.
- 1.6 We considered the following key questions under relevant headings:

Well-being

- Are children's well-being needs appropriately safeguarded in achieving permanence?
- Is the service provided accessible, safe and responsive to people's needs?

Care and Support

- Do children, birth and adoptive families achieve good outcomes through the provision of support which promotes their overall well-being?

Leadership and governance

- Do the leadership and governance arrangements ensure the provision of high-quality services for people?

1.7 Glossary of Terminology and Quantity Definitions See Appendix 2 and 3.

2. Summary of inspection findings

- 2.1 VVC delivers adoption services underpinned by a clear governance structure and a strong commitment to partnership working. The service applies National Adoption Service (NAS) policies and guidance, with a Statement of Purpose (SOP) that sets out aims, objectives, and standards. Further work however is needed to ensure all staff and panel members are familiar with its content and relevance following revisions.
- 2.2 VVC demonstrates good practice in promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion, and the active offer of Welsh is routinely made. However, some gaps in Welsh language provision were identified in a few responses from people gathered as part of CIW inspection activity.
- 2.3 Practitioners respond promptly to enquiries about adoption and provide accessible information.
- 2.4 Advocacy is embedded in practice, and the service is proactive in supporting children, young people, and birth parents to express their views.
- 2.5 Safeguarding is a shared priority, with robust risk management and regular supervision of practitioners. Improvements are however required to ensure unannounced visits to prospective adopters are consistently recorded and monitored.
- 2.6 Assessment and approval processes for adopters are comprehensive. Training is well regarded, preparing applicants for the realities of adoptive parenting and promoting understanding of the impact of adverse child experiences.
- 2.7 The region is recognised for its commitment to Welsh Early Permanence¹, with practitioners and panel members trained in WEP and positive feedback from both staff and adopters about the process.

¹ [Welsh Early Permanence Framework](#)

- 2.8 Family finding and matching are child-centred and timely. Practitioners work collaboratively to secure stable placements, though challenges remain in finding families for children with more complex needs.
- 2.9 Life journey work is embedded in planning and subject to quality assurance processes. All life journey books are delivered within appropriate timescales, however, delays in later life letters have been identified by the service.
- 2.10 VVC is committed to modern, flexible, and child-centred contact arrangements, using the NAS toolkit and specialist roles to engage birth families. However, direct contact remains limited, and practitioners are concerned about meeting rising demand without increased resources.
- 2.11 Adoption support plans are tailored and regularly reviewed, but access to specialist therapeutic support can be affected by resource pressures and regional variation.
- 2.12 Intermediary services are available and valued, though some people experience delays in accessing records and would benefit from improved communication during waiting periods.
- 2.13 Leadership and management arrangements are robust, with clear roles and responsibilities across the operational group, management board, and the joint committee. The establishment of a joint committee supporting a RAC is unique in Wales and benefits from the active involvement of elected members. The partnership agreement is regularly reviewed, supporting transparency and accountability. Performance and quality assurance systems are in place, and the service is committed to continuous improvement.
- 2.14 VVC demonstrates a strong ethos of inclusivity, partnership, and child-centred practice. The workforce is stable and experienced, with access to training and involvement in service development, though opportunities to access specialist training should be reviewed.

3. Findings



Well-being

- 3.1 VVC maintains a SOP that is reviewed annually and is accessible in both English and Welsh. The SOP sets out the aims, objectives, and standards of the service, providing a clear framework for practice and supporting transparency and accountability. While managers and some staff demonstrate a good understanding of the SOP and its role in underpinning service delivery, not all practitioners and panel members are familiar with the most recent version or its relevance to their work. **The service must ensure the Statement of Purpose is routinely shared, discussed, and embedded in all aspects of service delivery, so that all staff and panel members understand its relevance and application.**
- 3.2 The SOP references supporting cultural, linguistic, and religious needs of people using the service, and outlines the commitment to the Welsh language and the active offer. However, this could be strengthened with details of how the service will meet individuals' language and communication across the service, including a commitment to provision of services in Welsh. **The service must ensure the SOP clearly sets out how language and communication needs, including the provision of services in Welsh, will be met in practice.**
- 3.3 VVC has embedded NAS policies and guidance across its work. Practitioners regularly review these frameworks to ensure consistent practice. Most people report that information about adoption is clear and easy to find. Written materials and the bilingual website are valued by adopters and birth families, supporting informed decision-making from the outset.
- 3.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion are visible in practice, with support for single and same-sex adopters and proactive attention to culturally matched placements. Practitioners demonstrate sensitivity to identity and heritage. **This is good practice.**
- 3.5 Practitioners respond promptly to initial enquiries, and the active offer of Welsh is routinely made. Translation support is available where needed, and some practitioners are Welsh speakers. However, a few people report gaps in Welsh language provision. **The service must ensure consistent compliance with Welsh language standards in line with the 'More Than Just Words' framework.**

- 3.6 Adopters are actively involved at multiple stages of their journey to adopt and participate in introductory sessions, training, and regular meetings with social workers. Systems are established to gather feedback from people who use the service on a regular basis, that are collated and analysed to inform service development. A minority of survey respondents felt that whilst their feedback was routinely gathered, its impact on service development was less visible. **VVC RAC should consider how best to communicate how feedback and learning from compliments and complaints results in service improvement with people.**
- 3.7 The number of complaints VVC receives is low. Where complaints are not upheld, records show the service provides clear explanations and takes appropriate action. However, a minority of people responding to surveys feel clarity about complaints processes is lacking. **The service should proceed with plans to provide a clear and easily accessible link to its complaints process on the website.**
- 3.8 The volume and content of compliments received from people and professionals highlight the positive impact of practitioners, who are frequently recognised for their advocacy, empathy, and commitment to achieving the best outcomes. People consistently report feeling listened to, supported, and valued, with staff building trusting relationships and communicating effectively, even in complex situations. **This is good practice.**
- 3.9 Advocacy is embedded in practice. Practitioners support children, young people, and birth parents to express their views and participate in planning and decision-making. People are engaged in assessing and improving the service through youth groups, support forums, and feedback channels.
- 3.10 Most adopters report a clear understanding of the full range of post-adoption support and how to access it, however a few report gaps in their understanding. **The service should progress plans to strengthen written information about adoption support services.**
- 3.11 The service promotes a culture of kindness, respect, and inclusiveness. Most people report being treated with compassion and understanding, and there is a shared ethos of respect for human rights. However, some birth families responding to surveys report feeling uninformed about their rights and the adoption process, highlighting the need for improved communication. **The service has recognised this as an area for development and should progress plans to enhance communication with birth families about their rights.**

- 3.12 The service demonstrates a clear commitment to representing the child's voice in assessment and planning. Practitioners use a range of approaches, including direct engagement, observation, and input from foster carers, to ensure that children's wishes and feelings are reflected in key documents.
- 3.13 Safeguarding is a regional priority, with practitioners' alert to risk and assessments ensuring safe, appropriate care. Practitioners receive regular supervision and safeguarding training, to support their focus on children's well-being and safety. Risk management plans are implemented when needed, and foster carers and adopters feel well supported. There is timely escalation of concerns, multi-agency coordination, and management oversight. However, systems do not currently ensure unannounced visits to prospective adopters following the placement of a child are consistently recorded and monitored. **VVC must establish suitable monitoring arrangements of its unannounced visits to prospective adopters in accordance with NAS Safeguarding for Children Placed with Prospective Adoptive Parents guidance.**
- 3.14 Assessments of prospective adopters are robust and comprehensive. Practitioners gather detailed information about applicants' backgrounds, motivations, and capacity to meet the needs of children requiring adoption. The process is underpinned by a clear focus on safeguarding and the ability to provide a stable, nurturing environment. Most prospective adopters report feeling well supported throughout the assessment, with social workers providing clear information about each stage and maintaining regular communication. One adopter commented, *"We felt supported throughout the process and our questions were always answered."* While most assessments are completed in a timely manner, some applicants experience delays, most commonly due to the time taken to obtain medical checks or references. Whilst we acknowledge that this is outside of VVC control to an extent, **the service should continue to explore opportunities to reduce delays in completion of relevant checks by strategic partners.**
- 3.15 Training for prospective adopters is well regarded and prepares applicants for adoptive parenting. Sessions cover a broad range of relevant topics, including attachment, trauma, and the lifelong impact of adoption, and are delivered by experienced professionals and, where possible, by adoptive parents themselves. **This is good practice.** Prospective adopters value the opportunity to learn from real-life experiences and to discuss their questions in a supportive environment. Training is accessible, with flexible delivery options to accommodate different needs, and is offered at key stages throughout the process. Feedback from participants is consistently positive, with many reporting that the training increased their confidence and understanding, helping them feel better prepared for their adoption journey.

3.16 Welsh Early Permanence (WEP) is embedded in the service, supporting timely, child-centred decision-making and promoting early stability for children. Practitioners and panel members are trained in WEP, and feedback from both practitioners and adopters is positive, highlighting improved planning and continuity for children. The region has approved the highest number of WEP adopters in Wales as a result of its commitment to early permanence. **This is good practice.** The service recognises and is committed to continued training and focus to ensure WEP principles are consistently applied.



Care & Support

3.17 Family finding is proactive and child-centred, with practitioners working collaboratively to identify suitable matches for children without avoidable delay. The process is underpinned by a commitment to early permanence and stability. Regular information sharing between adoption practitioners, social workers, and partner agencies ensures that children's needs remain central to matching decisions. While challenges persist in finding families for children with more complex needs or older children, practitioners demonstrate persistence and creativity in their approach. Feedback from adopters and professionals indicates that family finding is well managed, with clear communication and support provided throughout the process. Most children are placed without avoidable delay, though a few adopting families report delays or gaps in communication, particularly during children's social worker changes or absences. **VVC should review and strengthen communication processes during children's social worker changes or absences, to minimise delays and ensure adopting families remain well informed.**

3.18 Child's Adoption Report and Annex B documents (CARB) are generally of a high standard, providing comprehensive and sensitive accounts of children's histories and needs. CARB's could be strengthened with additional detail about how the child's early experiences may influence their emotional and developmental needs over time.

3.19 Matching and transition arrangements are trauma-informed and child-centred. Practitioners work collaboratively to ensure children's needs are central to decision-making. These processes respect parental wishes regarding heritage and faith and are flexible and paced according to children's needs. Prospective adopters have opportunities to reflect through reflection/rest days, **this is good practice.** Foster carers play a valued role in supporting moves to adoptive families. The use of bump-in sessions supports smooth transitions, helping

children and adopters build relationships gradually and promoting positive attachments.

- 3.20 Practitioners embed life journey work in planning for children. They, gather and share information to support children and families in understanding their backgrounds, including experiences with birth families and life before adoption. Foster carers and birth parents make meaningful contributions to this process, and specialist life story workers provide additional support to improve the quality and consistency of materials produced, **this is good practice.**
- 3.21 Life journey work is subject to robust quality assurance, ensuring it meets expected standards, with draft life journey materials routinely provided to the matching panel and all life journey books completed within required timescales. Adopters benefit from workshops and resources designed to enhance their understanding of children's backgrounds. However, there are delays in the completion of later life letters across the region. **The service should progress plans to address this to ensure children receive timely support for their identity needs.**
- 3.22 Adoption support plans are developed collaboratively with adopters and relevant professionals, tailored to the individual needs and circumstances of each family. Plans typically include emotional, practical, and therapeutic support, as well as arrangements for contact with birth family members where appropriate. The service maintains a strong focus on supporting children's identity and well-being, with regular reviews to ensure plans remain responsive to changing needs. Most adopters responding to surveys report that support plans are helpful and well considered, some respondents report that life story work and contact arrangements are not always followed through, and there is inconsistency in the approach. **The service should ensure that later life letters are consistently provided in timescales and that contact arrangements are reviewed as required.**
- 3.23 VVC offers a broad range of Adoption Support Services including post adoption support valued by families; however, the service can vary depending on which local authority is responsible for the child. Persistent challenges remain with waiting times for specialist therapeutic support, often linked to external funding processes. VVC practitioners are proactive and persistent in supporting families while waiting for specialist therapeutic services. Many adopters' express appreciation for the support but also note frustration with delays and the need for more timely interventions. The service is actively working to address these issues and improve access to support for all families, engaging with partners and early help services. **The service must provide an equitable service across the region and should bring partner agencies together to ensure**

adoptive families have access to universal and specialist post-adoption support.

- 3.24 Birth parent counselling is routinely offered, with practitioners making repeated efforts to engage parents at various stages of the adoption process. Where parents face additional barriers, such as limited literacy or language needs, interpreters and translated materials are provided to ensure accessibility. There is a birth parent support group which is valued by participants for emotional and practical assistance.
- 3.25 VVC practitioners routinely establish indirect (letterbox) contact arrangements, ensuring that children, birth families and foster carers can maintain connections where this is in the child's best interests. Letterbox agreements are clearly documented and reviewed, with written guidance provided to both adopters and birth families. VVC demonstrates a commitment to the modern contact agenda through the implementation of the NAS toolkit, flexible and child-centred arrangements, specialist roles, and persistent engagement with birth families. There are, however, few examples of direct contact taking place currently and practitioners expressed concerns about their ability to meet anticipated growth in demand without a commensurate rise in resources. **The service should review its capacity and resource allocation to ensure practitioners are able to meet increasing demand for direct contact arrangements, supporting children's best interests.**
- 3.26 Intermediary services are available to support adopted adults and birth relatives seeking contact or information about their family history. Practitioners provide clear explanations, emotional support, and practical assistance, including counselling and help with accessing adoption records. Once allocated, intermediary work is handled sensitively and in a timely manner and opportunity is provided for people to return if their circumstances change. However, delays in accessing records are noted in some cases, often due to difficulties in locating historical files or court documents. Some people report frustration at a lack of updates during periods of delay. **VVC should proceed with plans to improve communication with people while they await intermediary support.**
- 3.27 Panel arrangements are robust, structured and well supported by Advisors. Membership includes people with a range of knowledge including individuals with lived experience of adoption. Medical and legal advisors are available to the panel. Panel packs are comprehensive, and members are well-prepared. Members ask appropriate and child-focused questions and provide clear recommendations with rationale. Panel minutes are of a good standard. Panel members have identified the need to diversify membership to better reflect the community served, and a recruitment drive is underway. **The service should**

ensure regular business meetings to enable panel members ongoing learning and feedback. VVC should continue efforts to diversify panel membership to reflect the local population.

3.28 The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) process relating to best interest decisions is a strength within the service. Decisions are made in a timely manner supporting the swift progression of children's plans for permanence. **Good practice** is evident where the ADM reviews all relevant documentation, meets with professionals to discuss the case, and provides a detailed rationale for decisions. The ADM's best interest decision-making process is well-documented, with examples of excellent minutes that clearly outline the reasoning behind each decision. However, where ADM decisions are made following adoption panel recommendations, the recorded rationale is not always sufficiently detailed. In some cases, minutes record agreement with the panel recommendation without clearly evidencing the ADM's independent analysis or decision making. To strengthen transparency and accountability, **the ADM should ensure their decisions following panel recommendations are consistently supported by clear analysis and recorded rationale within the minutes, when they give their approval or otherwise.**



Leadership & Management

3.29 VVC demonstrates a clear governance structure, with distinct arrangements for the operational group, management board, and joint committee. The operational group oversees day-to-day service delivery, reviews performance data and ensures practitioners implement agreed policies and procedures consistently across the region. The management board provides strategic oversight, which brings together senior leaders from each partner local authority to set direction, allocate resources, and monitor progress against business plans. This board maintains effective oversight of collaboration, budget, and safeguarding, with action logs supporting delivery of agreed actions. The joint committee acts as the formal partnership body, ensuring compliance with statutory duties and facilitating joint decision-making on matters affecting the collaborative. The joint committee is unique in Wales, established in line with statutory directions, and benefits from the active involvement of elected members, whose support strengthens governance and ensures strategic decisions reflect the needs of the region. **This is good practice.**

3.30 The partnership agreement is regularly reviewed by senior leaders and sets out detailed governance arrangements. Clear terms of reference underpin each

governance group, supporting transparency and accountability. Practitioners and managers' report that roles and responsibilities are well defined, and regular meetings promote a shared understanding of priorities and challenges. The governance arrangements support effective partnership working, enabling VVC to deliver consistent, high-quality adoption services across the region.

This is good practice.

3.31 Leaders demonstrate a clear vision and ambition for the service, which is well understood by practitioners and most partners. The RAC maintains a strong partnership with NAS, actively participating in national forums and adopting NAS policies, procedures, and quality standards; this close collaboration enables the RAC to contribute to the development of national initiatives, share learning, and ensure that children and families across the region benefit from consistent, high-quality adoption practice. **This is good practice.** Lines of accountability are clearly defined at local, regional, and national levels.

3.32 Managers are visible, approachable, and promote a culture of learning and continuous improvement. Practitioners report high morale and value the support provided by managers, who are described as accessible and responsive. There is a strong ethos of inclusivity and child-centred practice, with leaders modelling the commitment to partnership working expected throughout the service. Practitioners are all employed by VVC promoting consistency of practice, approach and team ethos.

3.33 The workforce is stable, experienced, and well supported, with practitioners benefiting from access to training and involvement in service development. Many practitioners who responded to the survey value available training, but a few feel that opportunities are limited, especially for specialist or role-specific development. **The service should review training opportunities to ensure all practitioners can access specialist and role-specific development as needed.** Recruitment and retention strategies are in place, and the use of agency staff is proportionate and temporary. However, **VVC must, as far as reasonably practicable, verify the reason for the end of employment where a person has previously worked in a role involving children or vulnerable adults.**

3.34 Supervision is regular and supports both professional development and well-being. However, supervision records show variation in the quality of reflective discussion and follow-up on actions. While some records demonstrate good practice in supporting staff wellbeing and case management, others are more task-focused and lack evidence of reflective supervision. There are also inconsistent approaches to supervision file storage. **The service should ensure that supervision consistently models strengths-based and**

outcomes-focused practice. Records must evidence progress on actions, support for staff wellbeing and consistent recording arrangements.

- 3.35 Persistent resource pressures, including IT limitations and capacity constraints impact the ability to meet rising demand, particularly in post-adoption support. The planned implementation of a new Integrated Computer System (Mosaic) is expected to support improvements in these areas, though timescales for delivery remain unclear. The service is reliant on manual data collection to inform service development in the absence of Mosaic, which is time and labour intensive. **VVC should progress plans to implement a suitable case management system to ensure the service remains data-informed and to reduce the administrative burden on practitioners and leaders.**
- 3.36 VC's marketing and recruitment strategy is characterised by a clear commitment, dedicated leadership, and proactive, data-informed approaches. The service has invested in a suitably experienced Recruitment and Marketing officer to lead campaigns. There is strong alignment with national priorities, a focus on diversity and inclusion, and ongoing efforts to address recruitment challenges and maintain a high profile within local authorities. Although the service is proactive and well-coordinated in its recruitment and marketing, a national shortage of adopters means that children, including babies, still wait to be matched with suitable families. **VVC should continue to strengthen its marketing strategy, ensuring it remains dynamic, inclusive and aligned to national priorities to support the recruitment of sufficient adopters.**
- 3.37 Partnership working is a strength, with established relationships across education, health, and voluntary agencies supporting information sharing and positive outcomes for children and families. Many people who provided feedback through the CIW adopter survey described positive experiences of multi-agency support, particularly during matching and transition. However, some people reported that cross-agency working between adoption support, health, and education was inconsistent, especially in post-adoption support. Most practitioners responding to surveys agreed that coordination with partner agencies is effective, but a minority highlighted limited awareness of VVC's role within some local authority teams and ongoing IT system barriers to information sharing. Leaders are proactive in engaging statutory partners, but **VVC should continue to improve partner awareness of the service and ensure all agencies are involved from the outset of new initiatives.**
- 3.38 While governance structures are in place, survey feedback for CIW from both people and practitioners highlights the need to enhance links with early help services and partners to address regional variations and delays in adoption support, especially in health and education. Plans are in place to improve these

areas, **VVC should monitor these improvements to ensure consistency, timely support, and effective collaboration across the region.**

- 3.39 Performance and quality assurance systems support leaders and managers to maintain an accurate understanding of how well the service fulfils its statutory responsibilities. There is evidence of the service driving continuous improvement, including remedial action to address identified shortfalls. People's views are regularly captured and used to inform service development; however, as noted earlier, a minority of CIW survey respondents feel their feedback did not visibly drive improvements. While quality assurance processes are in place and meet the requirements of quality-of-service reviews (Regulation 39), **the service should implement a formal Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for panels. This would support more consistent learning from practice and ensure regular business meetings to consider developments such as disruption research.**
- 3.40 Safe arrangements are in place for the maintenance and storage of records. Policies and procedures for the recording and management of records meet legislative requirements, and records are stored securely. The service is committed to respecting information rights and protecting people's privacy.

4. Priority Areas for Improvement

- 4.1 VVC **must** ensure the SOP details how language and communication needs, including the provision of services in Welsh, will be met in practice in accordance with Regulation 4, Schedule 1 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019.
- 4.2 VVC **must** ensure the SOP is routinely shared, discussed, and embedded in all aspects of service delivery, in accordance with Regulation 24 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019 and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Adoption Services 2019 (Regulation 10).
- 4.3 VVC **must** ensure consistent compliance with Welsh language standards in line with the 'More Than Just Words' framework.
- 4.4 VVC **must** review its capacity and resource allocation to ensure practitioners are able to meet increasing demand for direct contact arrangements and ensure equity and consistency of adoption support services across the region.
- 4.5 VVC **must** establish suitable monitoring arrangements of its unannounced visits to prospective adopters in accordance with NAS Safeguarding for Children Placed with Prospective Adoptive Parents guidance.

- 4.6 VVC **must**, as far as reasonably practicable, verify the reason for the end of employment where a person has previously worked in a role involving children or vulnerable adults in accordance with Regulations 2(1), 22 and Schedule 2 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 VVC **should** proceed with plans to provide a clear and easily accessible link to its complaints process on their website and consider how best to communicate how feedback and learning from compliments and complaints results in service improvement with people.
- 5.2 VVC **should** progress plans to enhance communication with birth families about their rights.
- 5.3 VVC **should** progress plans to strengthen written information about adoption support services.
- 5.4 VVC **should** review and strengthen communication processes during children's social worker changes or absences to minimise delays and ensure adopting families remain well informed.
- 5.5 VVC **should** continue to improve partner awareness of the service and ensure all agencies are involved from the outset of new initiatives.
- 5.6 VVC **should** ensure diversity of panel membership and ensure panel arrangements include regular business meetings for panel members and implementation of a formal Quality Assurance Framework.
- 5.7 VVC **should** ensure later life letters are completed consistently and without delay
- 5.8 VVC **should** ensure that contact plans are reviewed when changes are needed or in response to a request from one of those involved.
- 5.9 VVC **should** ensure ADM decisions following panel recommendations are consistently clearly recorded, including analysis and rationale, to strengthen transparency and accountability.
- 5.10 VVC **should** proceed with plans to improve communication about waiting times and processes for accessing intermediary support.

- 5.11 VVC **should** continue to strengthen its marketing strategy, ensuring it remains dynamic, inclusive and aligned to national priorities to support the recruitment of sufficient adopters.
- 5.12 VVC **should** review training opportunities to ensure all practitioners can access specialist and role-specific development as needed.
- 5.13 VVC **should** ensure that supervision consistently models strengths-based and outcomes-focused practice, with clear follow-up on actions and support for staff wellbeing and strengthen supervision recording arrangements to ensure consistency.
- 5.14 VVC **should** progress plans to implement a suitable case management system to ensure the service remains data-informed and to reduce the administrative burden on practitioners and leaders.
- 5.15 VVC **should** continue to explore opportunities to reduce delays in completion of relevant checks by strategic partners.

6. Next steps

- 6.1 CIW requires that VVC compile an improvement plan and share this with CIW by 11/05/2026.
- 6.2 CIW will review the improvement plan and seek further assurance of progress. This will be through a meeting with the Head of Children's Services of the host local authority as well as the Regional Adoption Manager within 18-24 months of publication of the report.
- 6.3 CIW will consider further activity to be assured of continued improvement and will consider bespoke engagement activity to support its ongoing monitoring.

7. Acknowledgements

CIW would like to thank staff, partners and people who gave their time and contributed to this inspection.

Yours sincerely,



Lou Bushell-Bauers
Head of Local Authority Inspection
Care Inspectorate Wales



Julie Heal
Head of Adult and Children's Services Inspection
Care Inspectorate Wales

Appendix 1

Methodology

Self-Evaluation

- VCC was requested to complete a Self-Evaluation to reflect on their own performance in specific areas of service.

Fieldwork

We reviewed the experiences of 20 people through the review and tracking of their records. We reviewed 16 records and tracked 4.

- Tracking a person's record may include having conversations with the person in receipt of services, their family or carers, adoption social worker, childcare social worker, manager, and where appropriate, other professionals involved.
- We engaged, through interviews and/or focus groups, with 23 people receiving services and/or their carers (to include adoptive parents, birth families, foster carers and adopted adults).
- We engaged, through interviews and/or focus groups, with 52 practitioners and managers This included childcare social workers, adoption social workers, team managers, assistant team managers, voluntary adoption agency representative regional adoption manager and head of children's services for the RAC's host local authority,
- We engaged, through interviews and/or focus groups with 10 representatives from partner agencies.
- We spoke with 2 panel chairs and 12 panel members.
- We observed 2 panels.

- We reviewed a sample of staff supervision files.
- We observed a Family Fun Day.
- We met with 2 attendees of a birth family support group and attended a family hub for adoptive parents and children.
- We reviewed supporting documentation sent to CIW for the purpose of the inspection.
- We administered surveys to VVC practitioners and managers, partner organisations and people. We received responses from 37 practitioners / managers from VVC, 50 from people and 26 from relevant stakeholders. 14 responses were received from birth families.

Our Privacy Notice can be found at <https://careinspectorate.wales/how-we-use-your-information>.

Welsh Language

CIW is committed to providing an active offer of the Welsh language during its activity with local authorities. The active offer was not required on this occasion.

Appendix 2

Glossary of Terminology

Term	What we mean in our reports and letters
Must	Improvement is deemed necessary in order for the RAC to meet a duty outlined in legislation, regulation or code of practice. The RAC is not currently meeting its statutory duty/duties and must take action.
Should	Improvement will enhance service provision and/or outcomes for people. It does not constitute a failure to meet a legal duty at this time; but without suitable action, there is a risk the RAC may fail to meet its legal duty/duties in future.
Good practice	Identified areas of strength within the RAC. This relates to practice considered innovative and/or which consistently results in positive outcomes for people receiving statutory services.
Well-being	A principle of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 which aims for people to have well-being in every part of their lives. Well-being is more than being healthy. It is about being safe and happy, having choice and getting

	the right support, being part of a strong community, having friends and relationships that are good for you, and having hobbies, work or learning. It is about supporting people to achieve their own well-being and measuring the success of care and support.
--	---

Appendix 3

Quantity Definitions Table

Terminology	Definition
Nearly all	With very few exceptions
Most	90% or more
Many	70% or more
A majority	Over 60%
Half	50%
Around half	Close to 50%
A minority	Below 40%
Few	Below 20%
Very few	Less than 10%