

# Business Growth Programme (BGP)

Joanne Alper - Director, Adoption Plus



**Sometimes the best things in life are stumbled upon when you least expect it. BGP was definitely that for me!**

I'm founder of a therapeutic adoption agency for older children who have experienced trauma, and my day to day life is very busy. As a not for profit, I have to focus on the work we do, as well as the business side; and sometimes it's a challenge doing both. My team is focused on the important work we do (rightly so!) and I'm the one focused on the business.

When someone mentioned BGP and said they wanted to put me forward for a Milton Keynes Council funded scholarship, I didn't really know what to expect. I'm always up for learning and improving my knowledge and skills, and given some of the business-related challenges we were facing in our sector, this couldn't have come at a better time. I was exhausted! Many long hours and sleepless nights trying to work out solutions for the fast changing and challenging environment we were in, whilst at the same time making sure both the families we were supporting and the people who worked for us, were considered and shielded from some of the chaos outside of their control. Not to mention the impact of covid and lockdown on children and adults already impacted by trauma. I'm passionate about looking after the people, who look after others, and I needed to invest even more energy in this. So you get the picture; exhausted, stressed and feeling alone with the challenges I was facing, I started BGP.

**I think it's fair to say my experience on BGP was transformational.**

The business information was incredibly helpful, there wasn't one weekend when I didn't have an "oh my goodness, of course," moment, when information fell into place that made so much sense that I couldn't believe I didn't realise this before. My notebook was organised into what "what I need to do now", and "what I need to plan for next". I felt productive, and clear about what I needed to do. This in turn energised me and I felt so much more hopeful. I love the saying "see a situation differently and you see a different situation," and that really was the case for me.

As a result of understanding my business better and what was needed, I restructured and recruited our first Finance Manager. This really has been transformational, because every decision I make is now based on a much clearer picture. This has assisted me in being able to turn the 'business' around, and we have a very clear and achievable strategy for the future. Despite all the sector challenges we have had to face, which has resulted in a number of other organisations in my sector going into administration; we know where we are going and how we will get there. On a personal note, I now sleep at night!

**I couldn't see at that time how BGP could get any better or be any more helpful, but what I didn't realise was that we were about to go from 70 to 120, on the 'helpfulness' speedometer.**

As a not-for-profit in the charity sector, my 'business' was a little different from the others. People were interested in finding out more about what we were doing, so I gave a little presentation at the end of the programme to the other business leaders on the BGP course. The response was humbling!! I couldn't believe how many business owners wanted to get involved and support the work we were doing. I was blown away by the strong desire to support us, by people who never had anything to do with this area of work before.

To cut a very long story short, 7 'superstar' BGP business leaders have set up a funding circle to support us, called Holding Hope. Together, we have formed a clear plan for exactly how they are going to help us fund therapeutic support for the children that we care for. We meet regularly and work together to find solutions. I'm no longer alone! I can't put a value on their belief in me and the work of the agency. I believe this partnership is going to make such a positive difference to children's lives, and I love the fact that we are doing this together. They get to hear about the impact their support makes, and their staff and customers get to see that too.

While it was clear from participating in the BGP course I would learn many things that would help my team and my leadership, I had no idea of the importance of the network and relationships I have built with many other the businesses.

**This is just the beginning, there is so much potential for this to grow and develop further. We are keen to speak with other business interested in finding out more about Holding Hope and be part of our exciting plans for the future.**

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## About the companies

### Cranfield Executive Development

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W: [www.cranfield.ac.uk/som/execdev](http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/som/execdev)

T: +44(0)1234 754500

E: [execdev@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:execdev@cranfield.ac.uk)

### Adoption Plus

Adoptionplus is an Ofsted rated 'outstanding' adoption agency based in Buckinghamshire which offers adoption services, therapy services and training services.

For further information and for an informal introduction, please contact;

Joanne Alper - [joanne@adoptionplus.co.uk](mailto:joanne@adoptionplus.co.uk)

Steve Holloway (Holding Hope Chair) - [steve.holloway@signifyresearch.net](mailto:steve.holloway@signifyresearch.net)

W: [www.adoptionplus.co.uk](http://www.adoptionplus.co.uk)

T: 01908 218251

