

The Adoption Consultancy 360 Ltd

Inspection report for adoption support agency

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Inspector Paul Clark
Type of inspection Full

Setting address West Grange, Clyst Heath, Exeter EX2 7EY

Telephone number 0139 236 2700
Email admin@theconsultancy.info
Registered manager Sally Hebler
Responsible individual Sally Hebler
Date of last inspection N/A

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This independent adoption support agency is operated by a private limited company. It provides psychological services for adopted children and adoptive families. The service also works with professionals involved in providing adoption services. At the time of the inspection, the agency was working with 120 adoptees and adoptive parents, plus an additional 46 families who attend therapeutic training courses. The agency commissions therapy through 11 therapists who work on a self-employed basis.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Requires improvement: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**

Adoptive families stay together because of the input of this agency. Families may be referred to this agency at the point of crisis, but the number of disruptions is extremely low. This is indicative of an outstanding service provision.

High-quality assessments of need are conducted by the agency in close collaboration with families, partnership agencies and other relevant professionals. Plans of action and therapeutic input are clearly spelled out in written plans which are shared with all relevant stakeholders. These plans are reviewed effectively and amended as necessary.

Adoptive families using the service regard it highly, outcomes are successful and families report positively on the quality of service. Placing authorities value the knowledge and expertise of the agency and the training that the agency is commissioned to provide.

The management provides inspirational leadership and promotes active research with major theorists and academic institutions into the field of adoption support, much of

which is innovative and makes positive changes in adoptive family's lives.

Rigorous internal monitoring and reporting identify areas of necessary service improvement which have been seen to have been implemented. This has led to the development of an outstanding adoption support service.

There are no requirements or recommendations made as a result of this inspection.

Experience and progress of, and outcomes for, service users

Judgement outcome: **outstanding**

This adoption agency successfully supports adoptive families by maintaining family stability, minimising disruption and providing positive outcomes for children. Families using the service make exceptional progress. One adopter commented: 'The work done by this agency has been so beneficial that he is coming out of his shell. I couldn't fault it.' Another adopter said: 'We are getting massive support from this agency. It is the only thing which is keeping us afloat and this family together. The information and advice that we are getting from the therapist has really, for the first time, brought about positive change in him.'

The needs of adoptive families using the service are clearly and properly assessed in collaboration with families, placing authorities, schools and other relevant professionals involved. The assessment methods are clearly explained to adoptive families and placing authorities. The outcomes and reviews of each piece of work undertaken by the agency are communicated to families and placing authorities both verbally and in written form. One placing authority manager commented: 'The agency really works well with us; a good sense of partnership. We review service users that we refer to it and we have never had a negative comment from a service user whom we have referred to this agency.'

The managers of the service and the members of the therapeutic team come from a range of professional disciplines, and they are well qualified, trained and supported. There is evidence that they are research active and are highly regarded by their fellow professionals for their knowledge and expertise in relation to adoption work. One placing authority manager commented: 'The quality of training is highly regarded by adopters, especially the Safety First course, which is really highly rated.' This expertise ensures that adopters feel well supported and advised, and results in exceptionally positive outcomes for adoptive families.

Quality of service provision

Judgement outcome: **outstanding**

Practitioners and managers are well qualified and trained in their professional fields. The therapeutic team staff come from a range of disciplines and include clinical psychologists, art and play therapists, social workers and occupational therapists. They meet regularly as a team, and have individual, inter-professional and peer group supervision. This means that families using the service benefit from a breadth of expertise relevant to their circumstances.

The managers and the therapeutic team of this adoption support agency are actively involved in producing and using relevant research to inform their practice. They work closely with theorists who are internationally acclaimed in the field of attachment theory, and with academic institutions who are developing work in the field of trauma-based sensory processing and integration as relevant to adoption. Their expertise is highly valued by partnership agencies. One placing authority social worker commented: 'The input of this agency has been pivotal and crucial to our work with this family. Its theoretical knowledge is hugely valued by us.'

As previously stated, assessments of need are produced in collaboration with families using the service and with all other relevant professionals. Case planning is detailed and comprehensive, and there is excellent inter-professional collaboration and review of outcomes. Although families are referred to this agency at the point of potential crisis, the number of adoption disruptions is extremely low, indicating a service of outstanding quality.

The agency takes great care to create the right therapeutic environment. Therapy rooms are furnished and resourced to a high standard. Play facilities for children and young people are in tune with their age and possible level of anxiety. The premises are appropriately located with discreet frontage, which adds to the high quality of service.

Safeguarding children, young people, adults and families

Judgement outcome: **outstanding**

Key policies relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults are clearly written and regularly reviewed. Staff vetting and recruitment practices are sound and ensure that inappropriate people do not have access to vulnerable children or young people. Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is a central function and commitment of this agency. Policies and procedures are written and reviewed in collaboration with the local authority safeguarding officers, and this helps to keep children and young people safe.

The agency has taken effective action in regard to the requirement of the last inspection, and the statement of purpose and children's guide are now clear, accessible and comprehensive, and accurately reflect the service provision and inform children, young people and adoptive families about the service provision and where they can go for help.

Management and staff receive training in safeguarding children according to their level of operation. The training relates to the particular risks that may affect adopted children, such as the disclosure of historical abuse and the dangers of social networking. This training is regularly updated. The agency has developed a training package for adopters, focusing on safe caring, and this is highly regarded by those adopters who have attended this course. This demonstrates a deep and effective knowledge about safeguarding children. Information documents given to children and young people support and protect them by advising them of available sources of help. The agency works in partnership with local authority safeguarding teams, and the local authority designated officer reports that there are no current or recent safeguarding concerns about this agency.

Systems are in place which ensure that the regulatory body will be notified of any significant event, as required by regulation.

Leadership and management

Judgement outcome: **outstanding**

The managers and the therapeutic team are actively involved in undertaking and using relevant research to inform their practice. Other professional groups that the agency works in partnership with consider much of this work to be innovative and inspirational.

The agency works closely and effectively with partnership agencies that value their knowledge and expertise highly. The manager and the therapeutic team are well trained and professionally supervised, and each member takes personal responsibility for their own development in the area of adoption. Staff receive regular supervision and support, both from the agency and from supervisors in their own professional disciplines. All management and staff undertake an annual appraisal which identifies their training and development needs. Staff confirm that they are well supported in accessing training. This means that adoptive families using the service benefit from support from well-trained practitioners.

The managers of the service monitor service delivery effectively in consultation with adopters and other relevant stakeholders, and produce timely written reviews of the quality of the service which identify areas for future development. These have included ensuring that the already highly-qualified therapeutic team receives ongoing training specific to the adoption support task and the therapeutic goals of the agency. This improves service provision and leads to better outcomes for adoptive families.

The agency has implemented the requirement of the last inspection. The statement of purpose, children's guide and guide for adults using the service are now clearly written, comprehensive and regularly reviewed. This gives service users clear information about the service.

Recording systems such as case files, staff files, and policies and procedures are comprehensive, clearly written and up to date. Systems are in place to ensure that the regulatory body will be informed of significant events, as required by regulation.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of adoption support agencies.