

Adoption Support Agency of Registered Therapists

Inspection report for adoption support agency

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Inspector	Rosemary Dancer
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Adults

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Registered person	Adoption Support Agency of Registered Therapists
Registered manager	Kunu Monica Lean Gordon
Responsible individual	Kunu Monica Lean Gordon
Date of last inspection	30/03/2012

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Service information

Brief description of the service

The adoption support agency was registered in 2007. Its registered office is in Guildford, although it has consulting rooms throughout London and the South East that can be used for the service. It also has an affiliate therapist who is based in the North West. The therapists work with people face to face and via electronic means, such as over the phone and internet.

The registered provider is also the manager and a therapist. There are four other associate therapists. All therapists have professional qualifications that include psychotherapy and counselling and are registered with professional counselling bodies. The therapists carry out counselling and support services to adopters and adopted adults. Therapeutic services are also provided to children placed for adoption and adopted children. In addition, assistance is provided to the adoptive child and adoptive parent in supporting the continuance of their relationship. The agency provides training regarding all aspects of adoption, including teaching parenting strategies. Counselling and support are also available to birth parents and their families.

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

Adequate: 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 **good**.

Accurate and detailed assessments are made of each individual's situation so that work can be targeted at achieving the best outcomes possible. The therapists are of a very high calibre and demonstrate a totally, child-centred, committed and professional approach to their work. Training is seen as important by the therapists to improve their practice and to keep up to date with developments in the adoption world. This agency fully recognises the life-long implications adoption has on an individual and this is reflected in the range of work they do. The agency provides clients with a high quality service that means that excellent outcomes are achieved.

The manager and the therapists are very knowledgeable about adoption. The agency is keen to ensure that any areas for development are addressed. There were some

shortfalls identified as a result of this inspection but these have no significant impact on the overall safety or well-being of people using the service. The staff recruitment process is not as robust as it could be, it is not made clear in the safeguarding and complaints policy how people can contact the registration authority, the manager has not obtained a formal qualification in management; the monitoring systems of the agency and its work are underdeveloped.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
12 (2005)	ensure that the safeguarding policy provides information to enable persons working for the agency and adults and children to whom the agency has provided adoption support services to that enables them to contact the registration authority (Regulation 12 (c) (ii))	31/03/2015
16 (2005)	ensure the copy of the complaints procedure includes the name, address and telephone number of the registration authority (Regulation 16 (4) (a))	31/03/2015

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure references are checked via telephone enquiries to each referee to verify the written references (NMS 21.1)
- ensure that the written references obtained are specifically written in relation to the role to be undertaken in the agency (NMS 21.3 (d))
- ensure that the manager of the agency gains a qualification in management that is at least level at 4 (NMS 19.3 (d))
- ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the agency (NMS 25.1)
- ensure the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the agency to ensure compliance with the agency's policies (NMS 25.2)
- provide for the management of the agency to ensure that all staff's work and activity is consistent with adoption regulations and NMS and with the agencies

policies and procedures (NMS 25.3)

Outcomes for service users

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

People using the service are fully involved in defining the service they receive. They consistently report very good or exceptional outcomes. Adults affected by adoption have experienced significant improvements in their emotional well-being and sense of self. Adoptive parents and their children experience significant improvements in their lives as a family. This is because, through the work carried out, parents have developed a clear understanding of their child and their behaviour in the context of their adverse early life experiences. They have been supported to develop effective problem solving skills.

Children's attachments to their parents have become more secure and their behaviour is improving. This means that parents are far more confident to support their child/children effectively.

Clients greatly value the flexible approach their therapist takes to the work, both in how they target the work, and in the practical arrangements. Clients feel strongly that they have been helped to move on in their lives. The majority of them put this down to the high levels of expertise and professionalism of their therapist. One client stated of the support that it had been, 'fantastic.' Another stated that the therapist is, 'very skilled in adoption and used excellent resources.'

Clients feel extremely positive about the changes they have been able to make to their lives through the work carried out with them and feel that the work is of an exceptionally high quality.

Quality of service

The quality of the service is **outstanding**.

Plans of work are developed with the client following very careful assessments of needs. Counselling is underpinned by exceptionally high quality plans which are clear, detailed and very well written. Sessions are very well planned and paced to suit the client's needs. Any change in circumstances, or emerging issues, are taken into account so the work can be adjusted accordingly and the best outcomes can be achieved. A parent stated that following the sessions, 'things always improve.'

The agency provides clients with a prompt, welcoming professional service. It takes into account issues of diversity and difference and works flexibly to ensure that all in need can access a service. Clients commented very positively on the accessibility of their therapist. For example, care is taken to ensure the timing of sessions are arranged to suit the client and therapists are accessible to them between sessions should they be in crisis. On the quality of the counselling work one client stated it was, 'quite perfect she gives time at the end to review and let me think, I don't

always enjoy them but am moving forward...(therapist's name) is my life saver.' All people using the service who were contacted said they would or have recommended this agency to other people.

The therapists are extremely skilled at working with children who have experienced past trauma. Children trust them and engage with them well and these relationships contribute to the success of the work. There is very good collaborative working with other agencies; with local authorities for example. The agency provides local authorities with written information about the outcomes of the work. Additionally, recommendations for any further work required are made to ensure unmet needs are highlighted to the authorities. Therapists have acted as mediators between agencies when there have been difficulties between them and this has led to a way forward being agreed that is in the best interests of the family. There is also some very skilled work carried out within schools to help children get the educational support they need. A parent stated the therapist, 'has helped us get our views across, the child's needs across and the support he needs to achieve at school...he has come on quite a lot since that.'

The therapists are totally focused on achieving positive outcomes for all who come to them who have been affected by adoption. They are well-trained, demonstrate an up to date knowledge and understanding of issues people affected by adoption experience and their practice is highly individualised; they use a range of therapeutic techniques that are based on the latest research. Individual therapists are active in driving developments in the field of adoption, for example, through publishing articles and books about adoption and its impact on individuals.

Adults affected by adoption receive very effective counselling and support that helps them to develop their sense of self and allows them to refocus their lives. A service user stated they have, 'nothing but praise for (therapist's name), fantastic support, extremely good at her job, understanding and supportive.

Safeguarding

The service is **adequate** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

The therapists are highly aware about effective child protection practice and have a good understanding of the implications of historic abuse. Much of the work is focused on helping clients understand and deal with the impact abusive backgrounds have had on children. The work carried out helps parents to deal more effectively with their child's behaviour. A parent stated the therapist, 'supports us to gain insight about the behaviours and develop strategies for dealing with them.'

Clear information is provided to clients wishing to use the service about the agency's approach to dealing with issues around child protection and allegations of historic abuse. This means there is a shared understanding between the client and therapist what will happen should such issues arise.

The agency's safeguarding policy has been submitted to the local authority

designated officer. This means that agency has established effective communication channels with child protection agencies and professionals for advice and support. No allegations or suspicions of harm have arisen.

The arrangements for the recruitment of therapists are adequate. Various checks, including police checks, are carried out. However, references are not verified with the writer and some references have the salutation 'To whom it may concern.' This means that they are open letters of recommendation and do not focus on an applicant's suitability for the specific role they will be undertaking. Additionally, the shortfall in verifying references with the writer is a further missed opportunity to ensure that all issues are sufficiently explored.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the adoption support agency are **adequate**.

The manager is suitably qualified in adoption work and has extensive experience in the field. She is also experienced in the management of the agency but she does not hold a qualification in management.

The manager has ensured that the two recommendations from the last inspection have been met. These improvements mean that the agency has established a link to the local authority designated officer and records are now being signed and dated by the writer; records are clear, up to date and securely stored.

The arrangements for monitoring the work of the agency are underdeveloped. Therapists take responsibility for arranging their own clinical supervision to support them to provide effective well-informed adoption support; this is required to secure their continued registration with their respective professional bodies. However, the internal systems for management supervision of the work are underdeveloped. This means the manager does not always have an up to date overview of all of the individual pieces of work the therapists are carrying out. At the completion of the work clients do complete surveys. These provide the manager with the client's view about how they feel the work has benefitted them. While these views are useful, the information the manager has about the quality of some of the work being undertaken is limited to self-reports by clients at the completion of the work. This limits the manager's ability to scrutinise the quality of all the work undertaken and the outcomes being achieved.

The agency is staffed in a way that means that services are provided in a timely way. While there is no supervision of the work by the manager, annual appraisals are undertaken and these provide good opportunities for discussions about further professional development. Therapists then take responsibility for keeping their professional development up to date and annual safeguarding training is undertaken by them.

The Statement of Purpose underpins the work of the agency and the children's guide and statement are clear, accessible and comprehensive. This makes sure that people

are clear about the aims and objectives of the agency and the services it provides. The agency has also developed a useful website that provides good information about the services provided, the counsellors involved in the agency and various publications and links to other agencies that support people affected by adoption.

The agency has a complaints procedure and ensures that people using its services are provided with a copy. The procedure overall is robust and easy to follow. However, it does not contain the contact details for the registration authority to enable a client to contact Ofsted easily should they wish to.

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.