

# Adoption Support Agency of Registered Therapists (ASART)

Inspection report for adoption support agency

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC068698
<b>Inspection date</b>	31/07/2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Mike Stapley
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Key
<b>Type of registration</b>	Adoption Support Agency

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<b>Fax number</b>	Adoption Support Agency of Registered Therapists
<b>Email address</b>	
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<b>Registered person</b>	Kunu Monica Lean Gordon
<b>Registered manager</b>	10/01/2007

## 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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Outstanding:* this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

*Good:* this aspect of the provision is strong

*Satisfactory:* this aspect of the provision is sound

*Inadequate:* this aspect of the provision is not good enough

*Not judged:* this aspect of the provision was not judged



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## **Service Information**

### **Brief description of the service**

The adoption support agency was registered in 2007. The registered provider is also the manager and an assistant. There are three associate therapists. The registered office is in Guildford, although it has consulting rooms throughout London and the South East that can be used for the service. The registered provider has a MSc, in Psychological Counselling, an MA in Philosophy and Psychology, and other professional qualifications. All of the staff are well qualified and have professional qualifications that include psychotherapy and counselling. The agency works with adults affected by adoption to give support and to enable them to think about the emotional implications of adoption.

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## Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This inspection was an announced key inspection.

## What the service does well

At the time of the inspection, the agency was offering counselling and support to adopted and adoptive adults, and any other adult affected by adoption, throughout London and the South-East. Evidence seen showed this work to be carried out to a high standard with a great deal of user satisfaction. Ms Gordon and her colleagues demonstrate a very sound, committed, professional approach to the work they undertake and issues of confidentiality are promoted very well. In addition the agency has recently been granted a variation to undertake adoption support and activities for children and young people. All of the documentation, policies and procedures are well written and of a very high standard.

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## **What has been improved since the last inspection**

This is the first inspection of the service, which was registered in January 2007.

## **What they could do better**

The agency is very sound and professionally managed. There is little they could do to improve the service, although they have recently been granted a major variation and the work they are planning to undertake with children will need to be closely inspected at the next inspection.

## **What sort of service is it?**

### **Statement of purpose**

The provision is good.

The agency has a clear, written statement of purpose which outlines its aims and objectives and the services it provides. This was reviewed in May 2008. Although the agency is not working with any children at the moment, it has developed a Children's Guide which can be adapted to meet the specific needs of any children with whom it might work, in order to make it age appropriate. This allows flexibility and ensures it is a more user-friendly and useful document for children to read.

## **Safeguarding and promoting welfare**

The provision is good.

The agency has a written safeguarding policy which makes reference to reporting and recording any allegations of possible child abuse. The procedures include historical abuse. The provider and associates demonstrated a sound awareness of the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation and intends to update her knowledge with relevant training, to ensure the safety of children is promoted and safeguarded. The two staff that have not had any formal safeguarding training are planning to undertake such training within the next six months. All staff have a copy of the local safeguarding procedures for the area they work in. The agency does not work with any children at the present time and there have been no allegations.



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## **User focused services**

The provision is good.

The agency is clear about the service it can offer, which is detailed in its Statement of Purpose. This information is given to service users, along with the complaints procedure, and is followed up by a discussion. The agency always offers an initial consultation to anyone who is thinking of using their services, to enable both parties to decide whether it is appropriate for their needs. If the agency feels it cannot help the service users, it will always suggest an alternative resource. Service users are treated with respect, honesty and openness to ensure they receive an appropriate service. If the agency can offer a service, they are able to respond quickly and in a flexible manner to meet the needs of the service user. Formal feedback from service users is requested through a written questionnaire but informal verbal feedback takes place as part of the on-going work undertaken by the agency.

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## Service delivery

The provision is good.

All of the associates are registered and trained psychotherapists or counsellors and, as such are fully aware of all the work which they undertake Part of the information sent to service users informs them of their right to ask the Local Authority for an assessment of their adoption support needs, and this assessment would always form the basis of any on-going work to ensure it was appropriate and effective. However, many of the adults that ASART work with prefer the individual associate to undertake this piece of work as opposed to the local authority.

As an adoption support agency, ASART is committed to the professional development and support of all its members in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for all its service users. ASART has quarterly face to face associates and management meetings where issues concerning monitoring, evaluation and review of services are and discussed addressed.

All associates have an annual appraisal which includes reviewing service delivery, training and personal development. In addition all associates have peer supervision at least 4 times a years to promote organisational and professional development and accountability; which supports their professional development. All associates have clinical supervision and two of them are trained in clinical supervision. It is evident from that all of the associates support and learn from each other.

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## **Fitness to provide or manage an adoption support agency**

The provision is good.

The adoption support agency is provided and managed by a suitably qualified, knowledgeable and experienced person. Ms Gordon has a relevant qualification, is a member of British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACp) and other professional associations and has worked in this field for a number of years. She has regular consultation and discussion with a variety of colleagues from other disciplines and professions and this enables her to keep up to date with current practice. All of the other associates are exceptionally well qualified, experienced and registered with their respective professional association.

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## **Management of the adoption support agency**

The provision is good.

The agency has developed a system for monitoring its work. The agency produces a written quarterly review of all aspects of the agency's practices. In addition the agency is thinking of developing an annual report in due course.

The agency is a group of independent registered therapists known as 'associates' whose aim is to provide high quality counselling and support services to any adult affected by adoption - to relieve distress, strengthen family relationships and inform and improve professional practice. The agency is committed to and has a tradition, of open access to services. In order to fund their services individual therapists will charge clients according to the therapist's own individual scale. Fees are determined after careful consideration of the actual cost of providing the service, historical prices, market factors and inflation. Fees are reviewed annually and revised as required.

## **Employment and management of staff and volunteers**

The provision is good.

All of the agencies therapists who are known as 'associates' are required to be fully qualified associates of their respective registration bodies (e.g. UKCP, BACP, BPS.) and, in addition, to have had specialist training such as ACE (Adoption Counselling Expertise, a modular training course provided by the Post Adoption Centre) as well as experience in working with adoption issues. Although each associate is responsible for their own individual therapeutic work, publicity and finances the registered manager, who is a trained supervisor, monitors and supervises all of their work. All of the associates have a personnel file that contains all elements of Regulation 22 of The Adoption Support Agencies Regulations 2005. All associates have a current Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check in place and the registered manager is aware of the need to have this updated on a three yearly basis. Associates have access to all of the agencies policies and procedures including Statement of Purpose, Complaints and Safeguarding Procedures.

The agency is committed to the support and development of all its associates with a view to maintaining high quality service delivery and the best possible outcomes for its users. Its overall aims and objectives are to promote excellence in adoption support, safeguard standards of practice and develop its associates both professionally and personally. The agency strives to meet these goals by the provision of suitable training opportunities and regular supervision of Associates. Supervision is provided for each individual through whole group meetings for peer supervision four times per year. In addition telephone consultation between occurs between associates as and when required. Associates also have access to consultation with external, suitably qualified and experienced consultants as required, to be paid for by the individual associates.

All of the associates undertake training on a regular basis by means of lectures, seminars, groups and workshops.

## **Individual practitioners**

The provision was not judged.

This provision was not inspected.

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## Complaints and representations

The provision is good.

The agency has a complaints procedure which is given to service users at the start of their engagement with the service. The Statement of Purpose, which is also given to service users, makes reference to other avenues for complaint. There have been no complaints but the agency is aware of the need to maintain a written record of these and how they are resolved. Any complaints are monitored as part of the quarterly review procedures. The agency procedure states that attempts will be made to resolve complaints informally by the individual therapist concerned but failing this a formal written complaint can be made to the Manager of the agency who will fully investigate the complaint. In addition the procedure states that the complainant will be informed of the outcome and any action to be taken in consequence, within a period of 28 days – so far as is reasonably practical – of the complaint being received by the agency as in line with regulation 17.

The agency will review the records annually to check the satisfactory operation of its complaints procedures. This ensures that improvements to the service can be made as a response to listening to service users. In addition the agency ensures that its complaints policy and procedures comply with current legislation, regulations, guidance and standards and that they are consistent with its Statement of Purpose.

## **Records**

The provision is good.

The agency has a written procedure on case recording which covers the purpose, confidentiality, storage and access to case records.

The agency will also provide guidance to service users on how they may access information held by the agency about them. All 'personal data' held by the agency will be safeguarded in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2002, as well as the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

In addition the agency will review at least once a year its policies and procedures for the storage of case records to ensure ongoing compliance with the requirements of prevailing legislation, regulations, guidance and standards.

Case records are stored securely in a locked cabinet in a lockable room. Appropriate security arrangements are in place for any electronic case records.

The registered manager holds all associates personnel records and keeps records of any complaints or allegations.



## **Fitness of premises**

The provision is good.

The agency has suitable premises to carry out its services. Service users are usually invited to the individual therapist's consulting rooms. These are usually at the home of the therapist, where a room which offers appropriate facilities has been set aside for this purpose. If service users cannot access stairs, then accessible consulting rooms are made available. The agency has an appropriate insurance policy in place which covers both household and business use.

The agency has a Disaster Recovery Plan in place to ensure it is able to respond quickly and effectively to a disaster affecting ASART staff premises and/or records; and to continue its day-to-day operation while the effects of the disaster are being set to rights.

There are also emergency procedures which name a therapist who is qualified to take over any outstanding work in the event of the provider or associate being unable to continue. This ensures that the business can continue in the event of an emergency and service users do not experience any disruption.

The administrative and security systems are appropriate for the nature and size of the service provided. IT systems are password protected and backed up; there are security systems and appropriate arrangements for fire prevention. This minimises the risk of any breaches of security.

The agency has all appropriate insurance policies in place as laid down by legislation.

## **Financial requirements**

The provision is good.

The financial arrangements which are in place are sufficient and appropriate for the agency. There is a clear statement of charges which are notified in advance to any service users. Invoices are sent out on a monthly basis and these are clearly itemised. Accounts are reviewed and indicate that the agency is financially viable.