

Chrysalis Associates Limited

Inspection report for adoption support agency

Unique reference number	SC387711
Inspection date	03-Mar-2010
Inspector	Marian Denny
Type of inspection	Key
Type of registration	Adoption Support Agency

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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

Service Information

Brief description of the service

Chrysalis Associates was registered as an adoption support agency in 2008 and is a registered company. The agency specialises in the assessment and treatment of developmental trauma and attachment difficulties. Its multi-disciplinary therapeutic team offers services to adopted, looked after children, parents and carers. Families receive an individually designed service, tailored to their needs, which is drawn from a variety of therapeutic models. In addition, the agency offers training, consultation and supervision for other professionals involved in this work.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good

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

This is an announced inspection and the first time this agency has been inspected against the Adoption Support Agencies national minimum standards (NMS) and Regulations. All the standards were inspected, apart from standard 15, and a judgement made in relation to them. Three standards were judged as outstanding and the remainder good. The findings from this inspection confirm that the agency is providing qualitative adoption support services. Its practice is extremely child focussed and good outcomes are achieved for those using the agency's services.

What the service does well

There are clearly written policies and procedures, which serve to support and promote good agency practice. There is a clear referral process and an effective system in place to respond promptly to a request for services. The agency provides good information about their services. Those using the service are welcomed to the agency without prejudice. Staff are committed to ensuring their welfare and others affected by the adoption are effectively safeguarded and promoted. All those working for the purposes of the agency are highly qualified, experienced and skilled. The agency is well managed and there are clear systems in place to monitor and control its activities. The agency adopts a holistic approach to its work, providing a good, thoughtfully and sensitively delivered child focussed service, with good outcomes achieved for children and young people.

What has been improved since the last inspection

This section is not applicable, as this is the first inspection of the agency.

What they could do better

The Statement of Purpose and children's guide requires revision to ensure they fully

meet the NMS. The agency's case records do not always contain case decisions and not all documents are signed and dated by the author.

What sort of service is it?

Statement of purpose

The provision is good

The agency has a clearly written Statement of Purpose (SOP), which contains all the information required under the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005.

The agency has developed two children's guides to meet the varying ages of children, who use the service. These guides are attractively presented, written in a child friendly style and can be produced in a variety of formats to meet children's differing needs. Whilst the guides contain all the necessary regulatory information; they do not contain information as to how a child can access an independent advocate.

Safeguarding and promoting welfare

The provision is good

The agency is extremely mindful of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of service users, as well as others whose lives are affected by the provision of its services. The agency has a robust safeguarding policy and procedure, which addresses the protection of children and deals with allegations of historical abuse. Staff are fully conversant with this document and have completed safeguarding training. This has ensured staff are fully informed of current safeguarding issues and changes of practice.

User focused services

The provision is outstanding

The agency provides comprehensive information regarding the services provided. This information can be produced in a variety of formats to meet differing needs. The agency values and respects all those who use the service and this is quite clearly reflected in their written policies, procedures and practice. Requests for a service are responded to extremely promptly.

There is a clear assessment and decision making process in place to determine whether a service should be provided. This ensures consistency of practice and takes into account all welfare and safety issues.

The agency undertakes extremely thorough assessments, carefully listens to service users' views and regularly consults with them regarding the service they require. A large number of service users stated that they felt 'respected' and 'really valued' by their therapists. They said the service provided was a 'very individual and professional service', which 'empowered' them and 'truly' met their needs. A number commented that the service had been provided at their 'pace'. Some service users said that staff adopted a holistic approach to their work and indicated that this approach had resulted in good outcomes being achieved. The majority described the service they had received as 'excellent' and stated that 'it could not be faulted'.

The agency's services are commissioned by several local authorities and these are supported by a written agreement, which is regularly reviewed. Those using the agency's services are informed of their right to make representations and complaints and are helped to do so, if this is required.

Service delivery

The provision is outstanding

The agency has well written policies and procedures, which accurately reflect and support their services. Staff carry out extremely thorough assessments and use this information to determine the service provided. Each service is individually designed to meet service user's specific needs, is thoughtfully, sensitively delivered and regularly reviewed. There are robust quality assurance systems in place, which effectively scrutinises the agency's work and ensures very good outcomes are achieved for those using its services.

Information obtained from service users confirms that the agency provides a clear explanation of the service provided, fully consults with them and involves them in any decisions, which affects their lives. The majority state that 'it is an extremely, professional service', delivered to 'a very high standard' and 'invaluable'. Parents indicate that they have gained 'a greater insight and understanding' of their child, some describe the help provided as 'inspirational' and others, as 'life changing'. Many spoke of the agency's support, stating 'Chrysalis is amazingly supportive', others said 'the emotional, psychological and practical support is outstanding'. Some families said they were 'indebted' to the agency, other stated, 'chrysalis is excellent, our family would have literally fallen apart without their help'.

Fitness to provide or manage an adoption support agency

The provision is good

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Equality and diversity are an integral part of the agency's philosophy and this is quite clearly reflected in all aspects of

their services. The agency's policies and procedures also underpin this practice, as does the Directors' professional code of practice, which they are required to follow in order to maintain their professional registration.

The adoption support agency was registered in December 2008. The Registered Manager is well qualified, has a management qualification and the necessary knowledge, experience and skills to manage an adoption support agency.

Management of the adoption support agency

The provision is good

The adoption support agency is well led and effectively, efficiently managed in accordance with its Statement of Purpose. There are clear processes for accessing services, which are easily understood and aimed at providing a good quality service. There are systems in place to monitor and control the activities of the agency and ensure quality performance, for example, an external consultant provides clinical supervision to the therapists and there are regular case file audits. The agency promotes and safeguards the welfare of all those using the service, as demonstrated in the comment, 'the agency works hard at helping children to feel more emotionally safe'. It also strives hard to ensure good outcomes are achieved for children and young people.

Employment and management of staff and volunteers

The provision is good

The agency has clearly written and robust recruitment and selection procedures, which are strictly followed. Personnel records contain all the information required under the Adoption Support Agencies Regulations, which ensures those using their services are adequately safeguarded.

There is a clear management structure, with levels of management delegation and responsibility clearly defined. A system is in place to assign workload tasks to appropriate staff, who are effectively supported in their work. Staff are clinically supervised by an external consultant, in excess of the frequency laid down in the NMS and records are kept. There is an appraisal system in place and staff are appraised annually. Regular team meetings take place, which provide staff with the opportunity to share their professional knowledge, expertise and develop the agency's services.

The office has good quality administrative equipment and the administrative support provided is of a high standard. This enables staff to carry out their work effectively.

Individual practitioners

The provision is not judged.

Complaints and representations

The provision is good

The agency has a clearly written complaints policy and procedure. It also has complaints leaflets for those using the service. These leaflets are in an appropriate format to meet the differing needs of service users and fully meets the NMS and Regulations. These documents and leaflets encourage those using the service to express any concerns or complaints that they may have regarding the service. There is a separate system to record complaints, which meets the NMS. The agency clearly views complaints in a constructive manner and any learning from a complaint would be used to inform agency practice. The agency has had no complaints.

Records

The provision is good

The agency has a case recording policy, which fully meets the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005. Case records are legible, clearly expressed and mainly of good quality. They are also maintained in a way that protects confidentiality. There is evidence of managerial oversight and file audit of records. However, not all case decisions are recorded on case files and documents signed and dated by the author. There is a separate recording system for complaints, allegations and personnel. Records are stored securely and in a manner to minimise the risk from fire, water or other disaster.

The agency ensures up-to-date, comprehensive personnel files are maintained for each staff member. These files are well ordered, securely stored and contain all the required regulatory information. This robust recruitment and selection process ensures all those using the service are effectively protected.

Fitness of premises

The provision is outstanding.

The agency's premises are secure and wholly suitable for the provision of adoption support services. The administrative systems in place are highly efficient and robust. The agency's Information Technology systems, which contain the electronic records are backed up and safeguarded. Written case records are securely stored. There are good health and safety procedures in place and a high standard of practice in this

area. The agency's premises and contents are fully insured. The agency has a comprehensive and well written disaster recovery plan. In addressing these matters the agency ensures that service user's privacy, confidentiality, rights and welfare are effectively protected.

Financial requirements

The provision is good

The agency's financial processes and systems are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice. Financial accounts are examined on an annual basis by an independent external accountancy firm. The agency is financially viable for continuity of service.

Recommendations

These recommendations relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the registered provider(s) to consider carrying out.

- ensure the children's guides contains information on how to access an independent advocate, as prescribed in the Adoption Support Agencies national minimum standards (NMS 1)
- ensure all records contain reasons for decisions and are signed and dated by the author. (NMS_17)