

Joanna North Associates

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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

Joanna North Associates Ltd was registered as an adoption support agency in 2006. Joanna North is the sole clinician and does not employ staff or contract services.

The agency provides advice, counselling, and support services to adopters, as well as therapeutic services to children placed for adoption and adopted children. The agency will also provide assistance to the adoptive child and adopting parent in supporting the continuance of their relationships. Support and mediation are provided, where an adoptive placement is in danger of disruption or has disrupted. The agency will also organise and chair disruption meetings. In addition, Joanna North Associates provides assistance to adoption agencies in preparing and training prospective adopters and in meeting the special needs of children.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding

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

This is the second time this agency has been inspected against the adoption support agencies national minimum standards and regulations. It was an announced inspection and 16 of the national minimum standards relevant to this agency were assessed. Ten of these standards were judged as being outstanding and six were judged as good. The agency provides an exceptionally good quality adoption support service. Its practice is extremely child and service user focused with very good outcomes achieved for those using this service.

What the service does well

There are clear, well-written policies and procedures, which serve to support and promote extremely high quality agency practice. There is a clear referral process and a very effective system in place to respond promptly to a request for services. The agency provides good quality information about the services provided. Equality and diversity are an integral part of the agency's ethos and this is clearly reflected in the agency's policies, procedures and practice. The agency is totally committed to ensuring that the welfare of service users, and others who have been affected by the adoption, are effectively safeguarded and promoted. All work carried out is closely scrutinised both internally and externally. The registered person is an exceptionally well qualified, experienced and skilled psychotherapist. The agency is very well managed and there are clear, robust systems in place to monitor and control its activities. The agency adopts a holistic approach to its work. This results in a thoughtfully and sensitively delivered service to families, children and young people, with extremely good outcomes achieved.

What has been improved since the last inspection

The last full inspection was carried out in August 2007 and resulted in one action and one recommendation being made. These related to the agency's Statement of Purpose and the storage of records, both of which have been fully addressed.

What they could do better

No actions or recommendations were made at this inspection.

What sort of service is it?

Statement of purpose

The provision is good.

The agency has a clearly written Statement of Purpose which accurately describes the services provided. It also has an attractively presented, child-friendly children's guide, which can be produced in different formats to meet the differing needs of the children who use the service. These documents contain all the required information.

Safeguarding and promoting welfare

The provision is outstanding.

The agency is very 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 an extremely comprehensive safeguarding policy and a detailed procedure, which contain all the required information. The provider is fully conversant with this policy and procedure and keeps herself fully informed of safeguarding issues and changes of practice.

User focused services

The provision is outstanding.

The agency ensures all adoptive families receive information about the services provided. This information can be produced in a variety of forms to meet the differing needs of those using the service. Requests for a service are responded to extremely promptly. The welfare and safety of the child and their family are carefully considered in deciding whether a service can be provided. When the agency is unable to meet the needs of those referred, the referring agency is advised. The agency greatly values and respects those using their services and this is reflected in the written policies and procedures. Thorough assessments are undertaken and the agency carefully listens to the wishes and feelings of adoptive families and children regarding the service they require. A flexible and responsive service is provided to adoptive families and children, with the utmost of care taken, to ensure they receive the very best possible service.

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. The agency is committed to equality in practice and works hard to ensure that all service users and contacts are treated equitably regardless of race, religion, gender, sexuality or disability.

Service delivery

The provision is outstanding.

The agency has written policies and procedures, which accurately reflect and support the services provided. There is a clear procedure to determine whether a service should be offered. Any work undertaken is informed from assessments obtained regarding the needs of those using the service. All services are tailored to meet the adoptive family and the child's needs, and are very thoughtfully and sensitively delivered. There are effective and robust quality assurance systems in place, which scrutinise the agency's work and ensure extremely good outcomes are achieved for those using its services.

Information obtained from adoptive families confirms that the agency provides a clear explanation of the service provided. They are fully consulted and are actively involved in any decisions which affect their lives. Those using the service confirmed that it is an extremely professional and child-focused service, which is delivered to a very high standard. Several service users indicated that they had gained, 'a greater understanding' of their child and, without the agency's support, 'would not have survived'.

Fitness to provide or manage an adoption support agency

The provision is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Equality and diversity are an integral part of the agency's philosophy. This is reflected in their policies and procedures, which underpin the agency's practice and is demonstrated in all aspects of the services provided.

The adoption support agency was registered on 24 July 2006. The inspection confirms that the registered person is extremely well qualified, has a high level of knowledge, considerable professional experience and skills and is eminently suitable to manage an adoption support agency.

Management of the adoption support agency

The provision is outstanding.

The registered provider has a clear understanding of how the agency should be managed. The processes used are transparent, easily understood and clearly aimed at providing an exceptionally high quality service. External consultants provide clinical supervision of the practitioner's work and ensure that the psychological service provided is of the highest quality. The agency is well managed and extremely good outcomes are obtained for those using the service.

Employment and management of staff and volunteers

The provision is not judged.

Individual practitioners

The provision is outstanding.

The registered provider places a real importance on her professional development and continually strives to increase her knowledge, experience and skills in her work. She consistently keeps up to date with current issues in adoption, as well as current guidance and legislation. She has also recently undertaken adoption research, which has resulted in a publication. The agency's work is clinically supervised at a frequency which exceeds that laid down in the national minimum standards. There are excellent administrative facilities and infrastructure, which support a highly effective delivery of service. The agency is managed extremely efficiently, effectively and in accordance with its Statement of Purpose.

Complaints and representations

The provision is good.

The agency has a clearly written complaints policy and procedure, which complies with the national minimum standards. These documents encourage children and adults using the service to express any concerns or complaints they may have regarding the service. There is a complaints leaflet, which is in a user-friendly format and accessible to all those using the agency's services. There is a separate system to record complaints. There have been no complaints to the agency. However, the ethos of the agency is such that should any complaint be made to the agency, it would be viewed constructively and any learning gained from this used to inform agency practice.

Records

The provision is good.

The agency has a case recording policy, which meets regulations. Case files are well ordered, with all records up to date, comprehensive, legible, clearly expressed and maintained in a way that protects confidentiality. There is a separate recording system for complaints, allegations and personnel matters. Records are stored securely and in a manner to minimise the risk from fire, water or other disaster.

Fitness of premises

The provision is outstanding.

The agency's premises are secure, extremely comfortable and wholly suitable for the provision of adoption support services. The administrative systems in place are extremely efficient and robust. Additional safeguards are in place for the storage of electronic records. Written case records are securely stored. The premises and contents are fully insured.

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 audited on an annual basis by an independent external auditor. The agency is financially viable for continuity of service.

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered provider(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Adoption Support regulations and the National Minimum Standards. The registered provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std	Action	Due date

Recommendations

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