

Adoption Support Agency of Registered Therapists

Inspection report for adoption support agency

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Inspector	Marian Denny
Type of inspection	Key
Type of registration	Adoption Support Agency

Service address	19 Lenten Close, Peaslake, Guildford, Surrey, GU5 9RA
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Registered person	Kunu Monica Lean Gordon
Registered manager	Kunu Monica Lean Gordon

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

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.

The registered provider is also the manager and a therapist. There are three associate therapists. All therapists have professional qualifications that include psychotherapy and counselling.

The agency provides advice and therapy to people affected by adoption. This includes 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.

Summary

The overall quality rating is Good

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

The agency provides a good quality service and all standards are judged as good. Its practice is service user focused, with good outcomes achieved for all those using this agency.

What the service does well

The agency consists of a group of independent registered therapists known as 'associates'. All associates demonstrate a very sound, committed and professional approach to their work. They participate in extensive training to enhance their professional development and have regular peer group supervision. In addition, they have external clinical supervision, which is provided by suitably qualified clinicians.

The agency is very good at consulting with service users about the service provided. Agency documentation and the work carried out are of a good standard. For example, its assessments are thorough and well written. Associates use a repertoire of therapeutic techniques to meet the individual needs of those using the service. This ensures qualitative therapeutic work is undertaken with the best possible outcome being achieved for those using its services.

What has been improved since the last inspection

No requirements or recommendations were made at the last inspection.

What they could do better

Two recommendations were made at this inspection. One recommendation relates to ensuring the safeguarding policy and procedures are submitted to the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Local Authority Designated Officer for their comment. The second recommendation relates to the agency's records, as they are not always signed and dated. However, these shortfalls have no impact on those using the service.

What sort of service is it?

Statement of purpose

The provision is good.

The agency has a Statement of Purpose which clearly details its aims, objectives and the services provided. Aims and objectives are outcome focused and the document effectively addresses how these outcomes will be met. The agency follows its Statement of Purpose and ensures it is available to all those using the services.

The agency has developed a children's guide, which contains all the required information. It can be adapted to meet the differing needs of children and young people using the service. This ensures that the guide is individualised, appropriate and can effectively meet the needs of the specific child or young person receiving the service.

Safeguarding and promoting welfare

The provision is good.

The agency places a real emphasis on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of those using its services. For example, the basis of its therapeutic input is to help children deal with their difficulties and keep them safe. Children are therefore helped to understand how to keep themselves safe, including when outside the household.

A comprehensive and well-written safeguarding policy and procedures are in place, which effectively address allegations of historical abuse. These documents promote the safety of all those using their services. However, these documents have not been submitted to the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for their comment. The Registered Manager is the designated person responsible for managing allegations and liaising with the LADO. Both the manager and the agency's associates are fully conversant with the safeguarding policy and know what to do if they receive an allegation or have suspicions that a person may harm a child. They have good, up-to-date safeguarding

knowledge and are well aware of changes in practice. This ensures the welfare of all those using the service is actively promoted.

There is a good safeguarding recording system, which provides clear, comprehensive information regarding any allegations made against prospective adopters, members of the household or those working in the agency. This ensures qualitative information is provided to the local safeguarding team, enabling them to deal with the matter effectively. This was clearly evidenced in a recent case, which related to allegations of historical abuse.

User focused services

The provision is good.

Good quality written information is provided about the services available. It is written in a manner that can be easily absorbed by professionals and families under stress. The information can also be produced in a variety of ways to meet the differing needs of those using the service.

Requests for a service are responded to extremely promptly, and parents and children can be seen out of normal working hours. Their welfare and safety are carefully considered in deciding whether a service can be provided. The agency always arranges an initial consultation to anyone who is thinking of using their services. This enables both parties to decide whether it is appropriate for their needs. If the agency is unable to meet the needs of those requesting support, it will always suggest an alternative resource.

The agency greatly values and respects people, and this is clearly reflected in its policies, procedures and practice. All those using its services, regardless of their individual differences in terms of ethnicity, gender, sexuality or religion are welcomed. The wishes and feelings of those using their services are carefully listened to and wherever possible they are taken into account. Sometimes it is not possible to do this, and in these circumstances, the agency always ensures the reasons for this are fully explained.

The therapeutic work carried out is always based on thorough assessments. Those working in the agency are highly skilled counsellors and therapists and take the utmost of care to ensure those using the service receive the very best possible help and support. Feedback from service users is seen as extremely important and it is obtained both formal and informally. The information gained is used to inform agency practice. Information obtained from the returned surveys indicated that people were 'very happy' and had 'greatly benefited' from the service they had received. For example, several parents said that the therapy 'had kept the family together'.

Service delivery

The provision is good.

All associates working in the agency are registered trained therapists and counsellors and, as such, are fully aware of all the work which they undertake. ASART literature informs service users of their right to ask the local authority for an assessment of their adoption support needs. This assessment always forms the basis of any ongoing work to ensure it is appropriate and effective. However, many of the adults that the agency works with prefer the individual associate to undertake this piece of work as opposed to the local authority.

The agency is committed to the professional development and support of all of its members in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for those using its services. All associates undertake training on a regular basis by means of lectures, seminars, groups and workshops. This ensures that they meet the stringent training requirements for their respective accredited registration organisations.

Fitness to provide or manage an adoption support agency

The provision is good.

The Registered Manager of the adoption support agency has the responsibility for the management of the service. She is suitably qualified and has the necessary skills, experience and professional qualifications to manage the agency. Regular consultation and discussion with a variety of colleagues from other disciplines and professions enable her to keep up to date with current practice. She is also an accredited member of the United Council for Psychotherapy and other professional associations. She follows its code of practice and its requirement for continuing professional development. Associates speak extremely highly of her and are very positive about the management of the agency.

Management of the adoption support agency

The provision is good.

The agency is managed in an ethical, effective and efficient manner and provides a good service. It has developed a system to monitor and control its work and produces a written quarterly review of all aspects of the agency's practices. Care is taken to ensure those working in the agency follow the adoption national minimum standards and regulations. The associates are very clear about their roles, responsibilities and their accountability. The registered provider regularly reviews the activities and performance of the agency to ensure that the service is effective and positive outcomes are achieved for those using the service.

ASART 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.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The associates are a diverse group of people, and equality and diversity form an integral part of the agency's philosophy. This is clearly reflected in its policies and procedures, which underpin the agency's practice. All associates keep up-to-date on equality and diversity issues in order to comply with their codes of practice, which they are required to follow to maintain their professional registration.

Employment and management of staff and volunteers

The provision is good.

All of the agency's therapists, who are known as 'associates', are required to be fully qualified associates of their respective registration bodies, such as the United Council for Physiotherapy. In addition, they have had specialist training such as Adoption Counselling Expertise, as well as experience in working with adoption issues. Each associate is responsible for their own individual therapeutic work, publicity and finances. However, the Registered Manager, who is a trained supervisor, monitors and supervises all of their work.

All those working for the agency have a personnel file, which contains all the information required under the Adoption Support Agencies Regulations 2005. A current Criminal Records Bureau check is in place and the Registered Manager is aware of the need to have this updated on a three yearly basis. All associates are subject to their accredited bodies' codes of practice and standards of registration. This, together with the agency checks highlighted above, ensures all workers appointed are suitable to undertake their responsibilities.

Associates have peer group supervision at least four times a year to promote organisational, professional development and accountability. Telephone consultation also occurs between them, as and when required. It is evident from this that they all learn from each other and are well supported and supervised in their work. In addition to peer group supervision and support, they also have formal clinical supervision with external and suitably qualified clinicians. This clinical supervision is paid for by each individual associate. Two of the associates are also trained in clinical supervision. Those working for the agency have an annual appraisal which reviews their performance and is carefully monitored by the agency manager. This ensures a good quality service is provided.

Individual practitioners

The provision is not judged.

Complaints and representations

The provision is good.

The agency has a clear and easily understood complaints policy and procedure that sets out the different stages in the process, timescales and independent avenues to make a complaint. It contains clear information about how to access the registration authority about a complaint. The documentation complies with current legislation, regulations, guidance and standards and is consistent with its Statement of Purpose.

All associates have a good understanding of the complaints policy, procedure and its operation. Those using the service were aware of the complaints documentation and the process. All were confident if they made a complaint, they would be carefully listened to and the matter effectively dealt with. The effectiveness of the agency's communication with its service users ensures minor difficulties are resolved before they become complaints.

The agency has not received a complaint to date. However, the agency is aware of the need to maintain a written record of these and to record how they are resolved. The Registered Manager also recognises the need to monitor complaints on a regular basis to ensure agency practice issues that emerge are addressed.

Records

The provision is good.

Guidance to service users on how they may access information held by the agency about them is available. All personal data held by the agency is safeguarded in accordance with the requirements of current legislation.

The agency has a written procedure on case recording which covers the purpose, confidentiality, storage and access to case records. The agency has firm plans in place to annually review its policies and procedures for the storage of case records to ensure ongoing compliance with the requirements of prevailing legislation, regulations, guidance and standards.

Associates have a good understanding of the purpose of records, managing confidential information and dealing with requests for access to, or disclosure from, adoption case records. Case records are well written, legible, clearly expressed and provide clear information about the work being carried out by the agency. However, not all are signed and dated.

There is a separate recording system for complaints, allegations and personnel

matters. These records are held by the Registered Manager. All case records are stored securely in a locked cabinet in a lockable room. Appropriate security arrangements are in place for any electronic case records.

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. However, the agency will also use service users' homes, if this is appropriate.

The administrative and security systems are appropriate for the nature and size of the service provided. Information Technology systems are password protected and backed up, and there are appropriate security systems in place to minimise the risk of any breaches of security.

Manual case records are securely stored and in a manner to minimise the risk from fire, water or other disaster. Associates have an appropriate insurance policy in place which covers both household and business use.

ASART has a disaster recovery plan in place to ensure it is able to respond quickly and effectively to any disaster affecting the agency. This plan ensures the continuity of the day-to-day operation of the agency and that those using the service continue to receive a service without any disruption.

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.

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.

Recommendations

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

Safeguarding and promoting	ensure the written safeguarding policy and procedures have been submitted to the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Local Authority Designated Officer for their comment (NMS 22.4)
Records	ensure all agency records are signed and dated. (NMS 27.4)