

Leslie Ironside

Inspection report for adoption support agency

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Inspector	Mike Stapley
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Registered manager	
Responsible individual	
Date of last inspection	25/10/2010

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This adoption support agency is managed by an individual practitioner Dr Leslie Ironside who provides a service to adopters and their children within Brighton and the surrounding area. Dr Ironside is a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist who is a member of the Association of Child Psychotherapists and the British Psychoanalytic Council.

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 **outstanding**.

This agency achieves exceptional outcomes for service users, who were all very positive about the service. The service is of an exceptionally high quality, and is delivered by a very experienced and well-qualified psychotherapist. Those that use the service and those authorities that commission his service speak very highly of the work undertaken by him. It is without doubt a service that offers a great deal of support to adopters who are full of praise and admiration of the service they receive. The outcomes are evident in that all of those spoken to and contacted during this inspection spoke highly of the support he offered when managing complex and difficult situations. The strengths of the service are evident and the work undertaken by Dr Ironside is both innovative and creative which in turn leads to excellent outcomes for adopters and their children. No statutory requirements or recommendations have been made following this inspection.

Outcomes for service users

Outcomes for children and young people are **outstanding**.

The provider of the agency, Dr Leslie Ironside, is a consultant child and adolescent psychotherapist who provides a unique service to adopters referred by local authorities or themselves. All of the service users reported that he offers a flexible and responsive service and that he takes the utmost of care to ensure they receive the very best possible service.

The outcomes for those who use the agency are excellent. All of the service users that were seen and spoken to during the course of this inspection spoke very highly of the service provided. In addition all of the feedback and evaluation forms completed by service users was extremely positive. All service users stated that the service they received was excellent. One service user stated that 'I find Leslie to be a fantastic resource and person for discussing and reflecting on our parenting issues.' while another said that, 'We found Leslie to be very supportive and understanding. He has provided real insight into the kind of issues and behaviours we were dealing with.' The service offers exceptionally good adoption support with one service user commenting that he, 'has given us insight and understanding in helping us make sense of the situation' and that the service had, 'helped us reflect on our children's issues.' There are examples of innovative practice and going the 'extra mile' to ensure service users are supported in any issues they may face with other agencies.

The agency works closely with local authorities within the geographical area it serves. Local authorities commented that the agency responds exceptionally well to those it refers; there are no waiting lists and service users are able to see Dr Ironside at a time that is convenient for individual families. One local authority commented that Dr Ironside not only meets but exceeds the expectations of the families they have referred. Overall the outcomes for service users are exceptional; service users speak of relief at being able to access local specialist support, be seen promptly at times when situations for them have been very difficult and complex with some families feeling overwhelmed with the situations they find themselves in. Service delivery is monitored by the local authorities that use the service on an annual basis to ensure the quality of the delivery of service is high and value for money.

Quality of service

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

The agency ensures all service users receive information about the services that can be offered to individual families. This information can be produced in a variety of ways to meet the differing needs of those using the service. The agency can respond to referrals from the local authority in a timely manner. In addition some families refer themselves; however referrals are made there is equality of service delivery for all. The welfare of the families and individuals referred to the agency is of paramount importance and service users are supported in a sensitive and caring manner.

The agency greatly values and respects those using its services and this is reflected in the written policies and procedures that underpin the work of the agency. The agency's services are commissioned by several local authorities and are supported by a written agreement, which is regularly reviewed. Feedback from two local authorities was extremely positive; one service manager said, 'I rate him (Dr Ironside) very highly', while another said, 'they offer an extremely valuable service to adopted families and their children; they are able to respond reasonably quickly to any referral that we make.' 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; although at the time of the inspection there had been no complaints made only compliments. The agency is committed to equality in its practice and works hard to ensure that all service users and contacts are treated equitably regardless of their race, religion, gender, sexuality or disability.

Feedback from service users is seen as extremely important and is regularly obtained from those who use the service in order to monitor and improve it. Dr Ironside undertakes an annual stakeholder survey and all surveys reviewed were exceptionally positive.

A holistic approach is taken and all services are tailored to meet each family's needs. They are thoughtfully and sensitively delivered by Dr Ironside who is very experienced and high qualified in working with families in a therapeutic manner. Information obtained from those that use the service confirm that the agency provides a clear explanation of the service provided, that they are fully consulted and are actively supported in any decisions which affect their family's future. All of those using the service confirmed that it is an extremely professional service and delivered to an exceptionally high standard.

Clinical notes are kept for all families using the service and there is regular review of the service to ensure it is of a high quality. The overview of service users spoken to and seen during the course of this inspection was that it is a 'fantastic resource' that should be available to all adopters who need it. Dr Ironside is an 'expert' in the field of adoption support and his work is underpinned by members of two professional bodies which keep him abreast and updated on current research. In addition Dr Ironside is supported and is able to talk through any issues during clinical supervision.

Safeguarding

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

The provider of the agency has a great deal of knowledge regarding safeguarding and historical abuse and this is at the heart of the work he undertakes with families. Dr Ironside ensures that he keeps up to date with current research regarding safeguarding and ensures that his policies and procedures reflect good practice. The agency has developed very positive working relationships with the local authorities it works with and any issues of concern would be discussed at a local level. In addition Dr Ironside maintains contact with those responsible for safeguarding locally, including the Local Authority Designated Officer. The agency has highlighted safeguarding in its annual stakeholder survey and service users spoken to during the course of this inspection are confident that any issues of safeguarding would be robustly managed in a professional manner. Dr Ironside is also able to discuss any issues of concern, including historical abuse, during his clinical supervision. Service users advise that they are aware of the agency's complaints procedure, although at the time of the inspection no complaints had been received. Any concerns,

complaints or compliments that the agency receives are used to develop the service. The agency is managed by a sole provider who does not employ any staff or volunteers.

Leadership and management

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

The registered provider places a real premium on his professional development and continuously strives to increase his knowledge, experience and skills. He is also up to date with current issues in the adoption field, as well as current guidance and developments in legislation. Dr Ironside's work is clinically supervised monthly; in addition he has 'peer supervision' every month. He is also able to access individual supervision for additional support if needed.

Dr Ironside manages the agency in a very effective and efficient manner. He is able to respond to service users in an emergency and can offer appointments out of hours. In addition he has the financial expertise to ensure that the agency is run on a sound financial basis and in an extremely professional manner. Dr Ironside has a current Criminal Records Bureau check that is renewed every three years. He maintains exceptionally high standards and follows the standards for professional development as laid out by the Association of Child Psychotherapists and the British Psychoanalytical Council. Testimony to the work of Dr Ironside, one service user commented, that 'We were able to discuss strategies with Leslie and he was able to help us understand why our adopted children might be behaving as they are. This gave us much needed confidence and reassurance.' the service user added that, 'Leslie is focused on understanding what is going on, the practical steps that can help the situation and the limits to what can be done. This is very reassuring and helpful to stressed parents.'

The administrative facilities and infrastructure are excellent and support the delivery of an highly effective service. The agency is managed extremely efficiently, effectively and in accordance with the Statement of Purpose.

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 adoption support agencies.