

Catch-Point Consultancy Limited

Inspection report for adoption support agency

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Inspector	Heather Chaplin
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Registered manager	Frances Joy Hasler
Responsible individual	Thomas William Pyne
Date of last inspection	21/12/2011

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Service information

Brief description of the service

Catch-Point undertakes a range of therapeutic and assessment work, using a trauma and recovery model with an emphasis on attachment theory. Therapy may be long or short term. The agency provides services to fostered and adopted children and their families.

Based in Bristol, the service offers regular therapeutic sessions at their office, and at other locations around the country, including Hampshire, Wales and Devon.

The service is a not-for-profit community interest company, managed by a small team of directors. There are approximately 50 service users who are in regular contact with the agency to receive therapy or other forms of support, including 29 adoptive families.

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 **good**.

The service has been rated good to reflect the excellent quality of care provided, which has led to exceptionally positive outcomes for many families using the service. The service's Clinical Director, who is also the Registered Manager, has developed a unique model of flexible, individually-tailored therapy. The work draws on an eclectic mix of techniques, including art, music, play therapy, drama and dance. The theoretical basis for the work draws on current research on the impact of early-life trauma on children's neurological development and ability to form attachments. The model teaches and supports playful, therapeutic parenting and equips parents with knowledge and skills to give them confidence in their own abilities.

For the large majority of those who responded to the Ofsted survey, the service has been crucial in enabling children and their parents to make sense of trauma and its impact on child development. One parent commented, '(Catch-Point) has enriched and enabled our family life greatly. It has supported our son's attachment to us and helped him and us cope with various difficult issues over the years; for example,

school, friends, contact, inappropriate behaviour, life story work and self esteem.'

Ofsted received many highly complimentary surveys, emails and comments from parents. One parent said, 'I am writing to convey my appreciation for all the help and encouragement Catch-Point and team have given...they have been a tower of strength in advising me, supporting me in critical periods. Without their support, it would have been very difficult to cope.' Another parent commented, '...without the long term support from Catch-Point and the trust that has built up, it is likely that the adoption of our children would have broken down.'

Although safeguarding practice is good in terms of child protection knowledge and procedures, there is a significant regulatory shortfall in the staff recruitment process, which has resulted in this outcome area being rated adequate. Effective staff training and monitoring is in place, which has meant that this oversight has not placed children and young people at risk. A requirement has been made.

In addition, the staff member responsible for recruitment checks has not received training in safer recruitment practice, and links with the local area designated officer (LADO) are insufficiently developed. Recommendations have been made in relation to these shortfalls.

Historically, the service's leadership has always been inspirational, visionary and motivated by the highest ethical standards, and the quality of care excellent. However, management and accounting systems were weak. As a consequence, at the time of the last inspection, there was little delegation; the Registered Manager was undertaking almost every key management task as well as leading on the clinical work, there was insufficient administration time to issue invoices and consequently, there were serious cashflow problems.

There have been major improvements in all areas of leadership and management, which has led to a rating of good. For example, the service has addressed the requirement and recommendations made. There is now a strong leadership team, supported by experienced and skilled administration staff. This means that the Registered Manager has been able to delegate some tasks to enable her to focus on the therapeutic work.

Regular management core group meetings ensure that although there are still some financial challenges, this is effectively managed and the service is now proactive in terms of strategic and financial controls. Some families commented that there had been communication issues in the past, but also said that they had noticed significant improvements in recent months. This has further improved the quality of service users' experiences.

Although some of the management changes are still being embedded, the new systems are now sufficiently robust to be confident that the improvements can be sustained. A recommendation have been made to help the service improve further in terms of developing a formal system for consultation with families and commissioners.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
19 (2005)	ensure that a person is not deemed fit to work for the purposes of an agency unless full and satisfactory information is available in relation to him in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2. (Regulation 19 (2) (d) and Schedule 2)	07/12/2014

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the child protection procedures are submitted for consideration and comment to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for Child Protection (or other senior officer responsible for child protection matters in that department). They are consistent with the local policies and procedures agreed by the LSCB relevant to the geographical area where the prospective adopters live. Any conflicts between locally agreed procedures and those of other placing authorities are discussed and resolved as far as possible (NMS 22.4)
- ensure that there is a good quality learning and development programme which includes induction, post-qualifying and in-service training, that staff and volunteers are supported to undertake. The programme equips them with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and service users, keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business of the agency. In particular, ensure that the person responsible for employment of staff attends training in safer recruitment (NMS 23.1)
- ensure that the registered provider monitors the management and outcome of the services in order to be satisfied that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users and that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration; in particular, ensure that the annual dataset is returned to Ofsted within the specified timescales, and that there is a system for obtaining written feedback from children, families and stakeholders. (NMS 26.4)

Outcomes for service users

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Outcomes are good because a large majority of families who responded to the Ofsted surveys are extremely positive about the service provided. They understand the theories behind the therapeutic techniques, to the extent that many families have themselves acquired considerable expertise in the field of adoption, trauma and attachment over the years. Some families who were once in receipt of services have offered to contribute their professional, practical and management skills to support the agency's work, which many find rewarding in itself.

One adopter explained that having brought up one adoptive family of three siblings successfully, he and his wife are so inspired by Catch-Point's work that they are planning to adopt another group of brothers and sisters. A key element to this decision is the knowledge that they can access effective, responsive professional therapy when they need it. Skilled, experienced and confident adopters play a vitally important role in helping traumatised children achieve permanence.

A number of parents said that before coming to Catch-Point, they had experienced other forms of intervention that they did not find helpful. This had led them to feel very demoralised and in some instances, they felt blamed for their children's problems. These parents found that Catch-Point's therapists explain the trauma behind children's behaviour, and recognise that the whole family may be traumatised as a result. Parents say that they felt empowered by this approach and as a result, they have been able to persevere in parenting children who find it hard to trust and who struggle with very challenging behaviours.

Young people have told the agency that they have gained insight to assist them to accept help. Some young people have experienced significantly improved educational outcomes, including being able to obtain and maintain a place at university. One young person said that the service helped her family to stick with her, and that is why she has made a success out of her life. Every family has unique therapeutic needs, and Catch-Point clearly states that its techniques would not suit everyone; but for many, outcomes have been exceptionally good.

Parents confirm that they are consulted verbally during their therapy sessions about the progress of the work. They are invited to comment on the suitability of the venue and timing of the sessions, as well as which elements of the work have been most helpful. Parents' and children's views are taken into account in modifying the therapy programme, which is a positive and flexible approach. The service does not have a formal consultation system with written feedback, so it is difficult to evidence the positive outcomes. A recommendation has been made.

Families interviewed were unanimous in saying that Catch-Point has had a substantial positive impact on their lives. Parents commented on the excellent level of support outside therapy sessions, including an out-of-hours telephone service. The

strategic director's links with schools have resulted in very positive educational outcomes for some children who might otherwise be excluded. One parent said that the Registered Manager is 'a diamond; I am very impressed with what she does. She has been very good with our son and an absolute rock to us.'

A social worker from a commissioning authority commented, 'I have had involvement with Catch-Point with only one family to date, who have themselves been full of praise...I have not been directly involved in the work undertaken by them, but have listened to the family about the very positive changes their work has made to their family functioning.

The assessment completed by Catch-Point, of which I was sent a copy, was extremely thorough and showed a good understanding of the issues being experienced by the family.'

Quality of service

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

Quality of care is outstanding because families say that they receive an exceptional service that goes well over and above a good standard. The Clinical Director is fully engaged with research and developments in the field of trauma and recovery. She meets regularly with leading adoption support professionals to share information and ensure that the work with families is informed by current thinking. As a published author and respected trainer, the Clinical Director attends international conferences and brings back new ideas and techniques to inform her team's work. She also shares her own knowledge; for example, by delivering a presentation with other leading professionals in the field of trauma and recovery, at a conference in Berlin.

The service is highly flexible and sees families from all over the country. Therapists travel widely and arrange local venues for therapeutic sessions, to help families that live a long way from Bristol. The service works with the family as a group and will often conduct circle of support meetings to include extended family members and friends, so that the family can all upon their own networks for support when needed. This enhances the family's own community networks and provides them with 'calm, confident companions'.

One parent commented; 'in all of this time, Joy and the other Catch-Point therapists we have worked with have been amazing, travelling long distances to run therapy sessions in (our local authority) and working hard to build a team of professionals around our child, as well as to educate those professionals about her needs...in addition to the work that Joy has been contracted to do, she freely gives of her time to provide us with advice and support as well as to (our child's) foster carer. Overall we think Catch-Point are doing a fantastic job in very difficult circumstances. Joy's understanding of children with early life trauma is amazing.'

Other parent said, 'Joy has provided excellent support to keep us grounded and supported when we have felt isolated.'

The Clinical Director conducts a detailed assessment of each family's needs. Therapists are assigned in pairs, according to their different skills and experiences, and how these might help each individual child. For example, therapists may be qualified in dance and movement, music, drama, art or play therapy.

The service listens to families throughout the programme of work, and works exceptionally well to address each child's unique and changing needs. If appropriate, another therapist can be introduced to address emerging issues. If the service is unlikely to be able to meet a child's needs, the clinical director suggests other services that may help. The service has good links with other adoption support agencies, fostering and voluntary adoption services to and works collaboratively to support service users and promote the best possible outcomes.

Assessments and therapeutic sessions are well recorded and care planning documents are detailed, comprehensive and well written. This helps to ensure that there is continuity for each family and a clear plan to guide the therapeutic work. The service works effectively with local authorities to provide a locally-based, flexible service.

Parents praised the agency's out-of-hours response service. Many who commented said that they find this a tremendously effective source of support. They also find the agency's family days helpful, as it provides informal social contact with parents and children in a similar situation. One parent said, 'our youngest daughter particularly enjoys these days and mixes well with the other children and has taken a leader role when the children were putting on a short play. The staff understand the children, their triggers and provide activities that are relaxed and keep them safe.'

Children receive excellent support to sustain their school placements. Catch-Point's strategic director is a former head teacher who has considerable experience in working with children with special needs. He links with schools to help staff to understand and cope with children who are having difficulties with their behaviour and relationships with others. One parent said, 'Catch-Point have been proactive in working with the school and offering guidance and strategies to manage (our child's) behaviour in class, which some teachers have taken on board and some have not. Traditional behaviour management strategies do not work with our children, and it can be a challenge to get the schools to understand or accept this. (The strategic director) has been very proactive with our child's school.'

Family members are empowered and supported to learn more about attachment, trauma and loss. This enables them to become experts on their own situation and many parents now have considerable analytical understanding of the impact of adoption on family life. Children and young people have fed back to the service that they are relieved that their parents have been helped to understand why they sometimes behave in certain ways. This takes enormous pressure off young people, who often struggle to identify and explain their feelings.

Safeguarding

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

Safeguarding has been rated adequate because there are shortfalls in practice. The service practices equal opportunities to support fair and representative recruitment, but three staff files sampled did not meet regulatory requirements. For example, only one reference out of six was on the staff file; the others are held by the strategic director in a separate location. One member of staff had no photographic identification on file. Disclosure and Barring Service checks are all current, but have been obtained by other organisations. Some staff had significant gaps in their employment history and there is no evidence of these being clarified on or after interview. This has the potential to allow unsuitable staff to be appointed, although there is no suggestion that this has happened in this instance. A requirement has been made.

The files also lack contracts and supervision notes, although these documents are held separately by the clinical director. This scattered information means that it is difficult for the person designated to manage staff files to maintain effective monitoring. Also, this person has not had the opportunity to attend training in safer recruitment, so she lacks specific training for the role she has been asked to undertake. A recommendation has been made regarding training.

The service safeguards children and young people effectively safeguarded through clear policies and regularly-updated training in child protection. There is no doubt that safeguarding practice with families is sound. Families are made aware of safeguarding issues and the service works well with local authorities if there are any concerns.

The former designated person left the agency in June 2014 and the person who now holds this role on an interim basis has been in contact with the Local Safeguarding Children Board to advise them of the change. The service has not send its safeguarding policy to the Local Authority Designated Officer for comment and review, but one of the neighbouring commissioning authorities has requested and approved this document. Although the policy appears sound, the LADO's lack of opportunity to comment means that there is the potential for the policy not to comply with Bristol's own procedures. A recommendation has been made.

The service has an effective complaints procedure. This has the correct address for Ofsted. The service has received two complaints, both of which reflect the organisational issues within the agency prior to the recent strengthening of administrative support, described in more detail below.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager is a qualified music therapist who also holds a certificate in psychotherapy. She has substantial experience in residential work with children, teaching, training and writing, and holds a qualification at level 5 in business

management.

The Registered Manager has worked unsustainably hard for many years, with limited delegation and direct personal involvement in every aspect of the service. At the time of the last inspection, this had impacted on the service's ability to meet timescales and also, on business administration. There were also communication issues, both within and outside the service, and concerns about the service's financial viability.

Since the last inspection, considerable work has been carried out in all these areas to address the shortfalls. Administration has been strengthened significantly, which has freed up the Registered Manager's time for more strategic and therapeutic involvement. For example, the service has appointed a highly skilled and experienced business manager to join the existing team of administrators. The administration team's combined skills, commitment to the work and additional resources has led to significant improvements in every aspect of business management.

In addition, the service now has a core group within the management team, which meets every month to monitor the service and respond to any issues and concerns. The strategic director said, 'our arrangements are a lot more robust now; especially the core group meetings, which have made us much more proactive in terms of management.'

The management team has been strengthened and now shares responsibilities effectively. The Registered Manager has had several meetings with her own clinical supervisor to help clarify roles and delegations. As a result of this, and having the right people to whom she can delegate, the manager can now distribute tasks with confidence. This ensures that she has a sustainable workload and that key tasks are covered effectively.

These changes increase the chances that the service will be sustainable in the future. For example, the administration team has ensured that all recent agency contracts are underpinned by formal agreements. Invoicing is much more effective and the quality of financial information is much improved. Service users say that they have noticed the difference in terms of increased administrative efficiency. There are now firm foundations in place for the agency's future development.

The manager is now making active plans for increasing delegation in terms of therapeutic work, and is building a strong team with improved communication. Staff changes have impacted on the Registered Manager's plans to establish clear deputising arrangements, because the person identified to take on this role has now left the service.

Communication has now improved. For example, all the therapy staff now have electronic tablets to enable them to record their sessions and keep in touch with the service when working remotely. Therapists also now work in pairs, which has brought about a number of benefits, including accountability, consistency and improved communication. Service users commented on how the changes to the administration team had led to much greater efficiency. A social worker said, 'a

representative from Catch-Point has attended the meetings on the family and has provided excellent feedback and information about their sessions.'

Due to problems with the IT system and administrative challenges earlier this year, the service was unable to submit the annual data analysis to Ofsted or send out the point-in-time surveys to families and stakeholders to inform the inspection. After the inspection had been announced, the service worked hard to email families and local authorities individually, but the short time scales given may have impacted on some people's availability to respond. A recommendation has been made.

At the last inspection, one requirement was made. The service was required to ensure that it remained financially viable and sustainable. The service now has a healthy turnover, and there is much better quality financial information available to the directors. The agency has done a great deal of fundraising since the last inspection and is planning to do more, including appointing a fundraiser. There is still insufficient surplus over the course of the financial year, but the Registered Manager is optimistic that new contracts and commissioned work, together with improved strategic systems, will start to address this over the coming year.

The service has a clear, easily understandable Statement of Purpose and children's guides. These documents help families, staff and commissioning bodies to be clear about the aims and objectives of the agency's provision.

The service has good quality recording systems, which are secure and regularly updated. Recording is now electronic, facilitated through the provision of tablets to all the therapy staff. As some work remotely, this has been instrumental in improving communication.

Four recommendations were made at the last inspection. The first was to strengthen the leadership of the service to improve delegation of roles, responsibilities and communication. Considerable work has taken place and although the Registered Manager still has a huge remit, this has improved through the appointment of high-quality staff into key posts to support the business administration. This has also addressed the second recommendation, which was to ensure that there are effective deputisation arrangements in place in the event of the Registered Manager's absence.

The third recommendation was to ensure that staff have access to regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced persons. This recommendation is now met. Therapists confirm that they receive regular, six-weekly supervision from the clinical director, in addition to clinical supervision within their own professions.

The fourth recommendation related to the fitness of the premises. The service was asked to continue to seek suitable premises, because the future of the vicarage in which the service is currently situated was uncertain. This has been addressed. The service will remain in the vicarage until February 2015. Ground-floor, accessible premises have been identified in the same area. Therapists are enthusiastic about

the prospect of creating a purpose-built environment for their work. The Registered Manager and strategic director are aware of the regulatory requirement to apply for a variation when the move is finalised.

The service has not needed to make any notifications to Ofsted regarding safeguarding matters.

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 the inspection of adoption support agencies.