

# Leslie Ironside

Inspection report for adoption support agency

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<b>Inspection date</b>	26/02/2015
<b>Inspector</b>	Paul Clark
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Adults and children

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<b>Registered person</b>	Leslie Ironside
<b>Registered manager</b>	
<b>Responsible individual</b>	
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	29/10/2012

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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 and also from a second office, for adopters and children from the London area.

The aims of the service are to provide support and a therapeutic consultation, assessment and treatment service to adopted children and young people families and parents and to provide a consultation service to professionals working in the field of adoption.

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**.

The level of adoption support provided by this agency to adoptive families in crisis is outstanding. The practitioner delivering this support is highly qualified, experienced and highly regarded by referring agencies and service users alike. The level of communication and collaborative working with fellow professional services in relation to adoptive families and individual children is also outstanding. This means that the best possible outcomes for these families and children are achieved.

The work undertaken is flexible and innovative and is well supported by the practitioner keeping himself well acquainted with research and changes in legislation, regular clinical supervision, effective evaluation and review of service provision, and continuous service development.

No action requirements or recommendations have been made following this inspection.

## Outcomes for service users

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Service users universally report that effective outcomes have resulted from the support given by this agency, even when this has not matched their initial hopes, or aspirations. One adopter commented, 'We have called upon him three times in the past 10 years and he is always there to help us understand and sort out the problems.' Another stated, 'We feel we are being enabled to be much more positive about the task of being adoptive parents.'

The support provided to adopters and to their families thoroughly meets the requirements of the referring agency's adoption support plans. The provider demonstrates clear and extensive knowledge of these plans and works collaboratively with other agencies, such as schools and child and adolescent mental health services teams, in delivering these plans. One manager of a local authority adoption service commented that the agency, '...is a really good source of support for adoptive families. He (Dr Ironside) is flexible and adaptable to the needs of individual families. His elements of the adoption support plan are always closely followed.' This means that the expectations of referral agencies and service users, as defined in the adoption support plan, are always met.

It is indicative of the quality and high regard held by families of this service, that many adopters personally fund ongoing support from the agency after the number of sessions contracted by local authorities have been completed. In numerous cases ongoing work has been undertaken with families for many years. Its flexibility and availability means that adopters have a level of support that is consistent and reliable. This helps to maintain families through crisis and to provide permanency for children and young people.

## Quality of service

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

Support services to adoptive families in crisis are clearly defined, recorded and reviewed, and they are tailored to the individual needs of these families. Adopters and placing authorities comment on the high quality of service provision as seen in the flexibility of approach and the expertise of a practitioner who they respect and trust. One adopter called it, 'absolutely terrific; I don't know what we would have done without him.' One service manager of a local authority adoption service stated, 'he is an excellent practitioner with a wide source of knowledge.'

The practitioner is highly regarded in his field and takes responsibility for keeping his practice updated through acquainting himself with recent research and undertaking personal training in the area of adoption practice. The practitioner is frequently called upon to provide training himself, and to speak at conferences related to his field of study. This is supported by frequent and ongoing professional clinical supervision.

The practitioner has developed expertise in working with diverse adoptive family groups, in particular, lesbian and gay adopters who feel confident that he is sensitive to the issues affecting them. The understanding of the needs of this group demonstrates that the practitioner has a rare and well-applied insight into equality and diversity issues.

## **Safeguarding**

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

The practice of the service is effectively guided by clear policies on safeguarding children and procedures for action to be taken in the event of the disclosure of historic abuse. These policies are regularly reviewed. The practitioner has recently attended safeguarding training and has contributed to the training of professionals in this area of work. There is also a clearly written complaints procedure and service users are informed about this procedure in the statement of purpose and in the children's guides. There is a system for recording any complaint from service users, including children and young people. No complaints have been recorded by users of the adoption support service. The administration worker of the service has been appropriately vetted to ensure that they present no risk to children using the service. The practitioner renews his Disclosure and Barring Service records every three years. Effective systems are in place to safeguard confidential information held on service users.

The practitioner works collaboratively with professionals from social care and health services to support children who have been subject to abuse. The practitioner is highly qualified and trained in the area of working with children who have been the subject of abuse, and on the subject of the effects of attachment and loss. Direct work with individual children who have been the subject of abuse is at the heart of this agency's practice and is highly regarded by referring agencies thus indicative of an outstanding service provision.

The Local Authority Designated Officer for safeguarding children states that the agency works collaboratively with them and there are no safeguarding concerns related to this agency.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The practitioner places high importance on their own professional development and training in the field of adoption support work and keeps actively apprised of recent research, changes in legislation and findings in relation to this area of work. Additionally, his work is supported by regular clinical supervision and peer group supervision.

There are comprehensive and clearly written statement of purpose and children's

guides in place, and these documents are reviewed annually. The statement of purpose clearly defines the aims and objectives of the service and these have been largely met.

Administrative organisation and record keeping are well undertaken and of a high order and contribute to a highly effective service. The agency works well with other professionals from social care, health and education services and the practitioner is rigorous in consulting the views of referring agencies, other professional partnership groups and service users in service development and regularly evaluates and reviews service provision. This results in continuous service improvement and development.

There were no breaches of regulation or national minimum standards found at this, or the previous inspection and therefore no action requirements or recommendations have been made.

## 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.