

Gateway Psychology

Inspection report for adoption support agency

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Inspector Rebecca Quested
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Date of last inspection N/A

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Service information

Brief description of the service

Gateway Psychology Ltd is a private limited company. It is registered to provide adoption support services to children and adults. This includes psychological and therapeutic services for children and their families, and advice and consultation and training for those working with them.

The agency employs three associates, as well as the manager, to provide services for the agency. In the last year, Gateway Psychology has provided thirteen adoption support packages. The agency also undertakes work which does not fall into the remit of adoption support. This is not the subject of this inspection.

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

Requires improvement: 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**

Gateway Psychology is a good adoption support provider. The agency provides high quality adoption support which has a positive impact on adopters and children. The Registered Manager and her associates understand the lifelong implications of adoption and this is reflected in their practice. They develop excellent relationships with professionals involved with families, such as schools, health services, and local authorities, to ensure improved outcomes.

The Registered Manager carefully tailors each piece of work to individual needs. She involves all service users in agreeing clear parameters and intended outcomes; she is very flexible and prompt in responding to changing needs. The Registered Manager monitors progress within sessions to inform further therapeutic intervention. However, the recording of more formal reviews of progress is not consistent and is an area identified for development.

The Registered Manager is extremely well thought of and respected in her field. She has recently provided training for adopters in South Africa, which she undertook on a pro-bono basis, and to speak about this work at the British Psychological Society conference. Families and professional stakeholders all report high levels of satisfaction with the service. A commissioner said: 'Meryl is the first person we think of for complex cases which we need therapeutic input for.'

Safeguarding is well understood and the Registered Manager ensures that good

safeguarding practice is embedded in practice. She has not sent her child protection policies to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) or to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for consultation or comment. This represents a lost opportunity to develop positive links with these bodies to support practice.

This is the first inspection of the agency since registration. Two recommendations are made for improvement.

Areas of improvement

Recommendations

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

submit the child protection procedures for consideration and comment to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and the Local Authority Designated Officer (NMS 22.4)

monitor the management and outcome of the service 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.(NMS 26.4)

Experience and progress of, and outcomes for, service users

Judgement outcome: **good**

Adopters and their children significantly influence the content and delivery of the high quality adoption support service they receive. The agency ensures this through thorough assessments and responding carefully to individual needs. These assessments take into account children's backgrounds and identities, as well as their experiences as an adopted child. For example, some children are not ready to engage with therapeutic interventions and so this intervention is re-focused to adopters to support them until children are willing and able to engage.

On a practical level, the agency is very good at responding to service users need to access therapy within their home, or at specifically commissioned rooms near to where they live. Service users respond well to being listened to and this promotes their engagement with the adoption support service. A young person said: 'Meryl is helping me. She is very funny and makes me laugh when we have talked about something upsetting, she makes me happy again.'

Service users consistently report positive changes to their situation from the outset. A new service user said: 'the service is very good and I am feeling positive about it.' A service user who has been receiving support for a longer period said: 'Meryl is amazing. She is really friendly, non –judgemental and compassionate. She is brilliant with the children. The service has met all of my expectations.'

The agency works well with schools to promote their understanding of attachment issues affecting adopted children and provides strategies to support them. This enhances outcomes for children within education as they benefit from improved support to access all aspects of school life.

Quality of service provision

Judgement outcome: **good**

The agency ensures that service users receive a prompt response and a warm welcome which focuses on the needs of the child and the adoptive family. This is the case at the point of referral and during the adoption support service. Adopters say the Registered Manager always responds to their needs. One adopter, who had recently moved from another adoption support service to this agency, said: 'we feel us as parents are getting more support – Meryl is much more responsive and reinforces our learning.'

The agency undertakes thorough and detailed assessments which identify a

personalised support package for each individual within a family. The support reflects adopters and children's starting points and the impact that adoption has had specifically on their lives. This enables them to progress at their own pace.

The agency works effectively with the service user and the local authority where they have commissioned services. The Registered Manager has excellent links with several local authorities with whom she has developed positive relationships. They value her expertise in this field. She ensures that all parties receive clear, child-focused plans. She provides regular feedback informally, although there is not consistent evidence that she always provides this in a planned way, or records it. Commissioners report that the agency always meets expectations of service delivery and is very responsive and crucially, that, 'adopters think highly about her.'

The Registered Manager is highly qualified and keeps abreast of developments in the adoption field. She attends conferences and uses training to inform and develop her practice. All those who work for the agency are appropriately qualified and trained and use dyadic developmental psychotherapy (DDP) and theraplay, a type of therapy based on building attachments, as part of their work with families. The agency is, therefore, able to provide highly effective support to adopters and their children which promotes family stability and improved outcomes for children. For example, some children develop skills in improving regulation of their behaviours and so their angry outbursts become less frequent. Some children develop more trusting relationships with their adopters which allow them to give and accept affection.

Safeguarding children, young people, adults and families

Judgement outcome: **good**

The agency ensures that good safeguarding practice permeates practice. All those who work for the agency are thoroughly vetted to make sure service users are protected from unsafe people. They display high levels of awareness of, and expertise in, child protection practice and the implications of historic abuse. Service users benefit from their knowledge and experience which informs this high quality adoption support service.

The Registered Manager ensures there are robust processes in place to manage complaints. Service users are aware of these processes but have not had the need to use them. The agency handles any allegations or suspicions of harm sensitively and refers to the appropriate safeguarding agencies. Service users are aware of the limits

of confidentiality from the outset. The Registered Manager has effective relationships with local child protection agencies and responds promptly and flexibly to attend any meetings. This ensures that children are safeguarded.

The Registered Manager has not submitted the agency's safeguarding policy to the LSCB, or the LADO, for consideration and comment. The agency does not benefit from their input or from improved links with these services which would further enhance the agency.

Leadership and management

Judgement outcome: **good**

The Registered Manager is committed to improving the lives of the children and families who receive an adoption service. She works effectively with families and professionals to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to meeting identified needs. At times, this involves advocating on behalf of service users; she is effective in ensuring the right resources are provided.

The agency develops positive relationships with commissioners who value the frequent communication and the clear and timely assessments which reflect children's views. This was evident in their feedback: 'The psychologist sought all of our views and reflected the child's views clearly within her report. The report was completed by the date requested, and covered all the areas which we had asked to be explored. I will continue to recommend the agency.'

The Registered Manager is appropriately qualified and experienced to full fill her role. She is registered with the British Psychological Society and the Health and Care Professions Council. Regular individual and peer supervision enable her to reflect on her practice and review the effectiveness of her interventions. She ensures that all those who work for the agency are adequately supervised and managed and their training needs are being met. The Registered Manager is developing her skills in DDP to become a certified practitioner. She is ambitious in planning the development of the adoption support agency and growth and development of the agency are underway. Service users benefit from continual improvements in the quality of service.

The agency ensures that only those who are qualified, with appropriate experience and knowledge, provide adoption agency support. The Registered Manager ensures that the service provided is in line with the Statement of Purpose. They deliver support to alleviate the effects of early life trauma and bereavement on adopted children and to encourage and promote healthy attachments and family bonding. This results in improved outcomes for children and adoptive parents in terms of increased family stability.

There is appropriate insurance cover and regular reviews of the agency demonstrate its financial viability. The agency ensures the required information is held in relation to each service user. All case recording is up to date and case records are securely stored. However, the Registered Manager has not ensured that all case files evidence a review of the service provided, or that views of stakeholders are routinely sought in a way which can usefully lead to improvements in the service.

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.