

The Child Psychology Service

The Child Psychology Service C.I.C.

Office 4, Lancaster Park, Newborough Road, Needwood, Burton on Trent DE13 9PD
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this adoption support agency

The Child Psychology Service (TCPS) has been in operation since April 2013. It is a not for profit company. In October 2013, the service was registered with Ofsted as an adoption support agency to enable the agency to work with people affected by adoption.

The service provides assessments, undertakes therapeutic work with families and offers consultations and therapeutic life story work. Training is also provided on many topics related to child psychology for parents and professionals. Supervision is also available from TCPS to provide a psychological perspective to professionals on their clinical work. The service has worked directly with 79 families in the past 12 months.

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 February 2018

Overall experience and progress of service users, taking into account: Outstanding

How well children, young people and adults are helped and protected Good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers Outstanding

The adoption support agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the adoption support agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for service users.

Date of last inspection: 25 February 2015

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This adoption support agency is outstanding because:

- Families are exceptionally positive about the effect that this service has on their lives. One adoptive parent described it as 'life changing'.
- Therapists provide a highly individualised service that is delivered at a time, place and pace to suit the child and their family.
- The work helps to reduce the risk of family breakdown and further trauma for the children.
- Families feel that they are listened to and that the therapists are committed to making a positive difference in their lives.
- The manager and staff team are highly experienced and committed to providing high-quality services to children and their families.
- The service is managed by an inspirational leader. She is passionate about improving children's relationships with their adoptive parents. Staff describe her as 'motivational' and 'supportive'.
- A comprehensive range of outcome measures show the positive impact that this service has on children's lives.

The adoption support agency's areas for development:

- The registered manager does not ensure that all staff employment references are verified.
- The staff training plan is not effectively evaluated to ensure that staff awareness of child sexual exploitation and radicalisation are addressed.

What does the adoption support agency need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure that all people working in or for the purposes of the agency, are interviewed as part of the selection process and have their references checked to assess suitability before taking up their duties. Telephone enquiries are made to each referee to verify the written reference. (National minimum standard 21.1)
- Ensure that the learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness at least annually and if necessary is updated. (National minimum standard 23.2)

This is in particular reference to radicalisation and child sexual exploitation awareness training.

Inspection judgement

Overall experiences and progress of service users: outstanding

The service provides a highly responsive and flexible approach to adoption support. Current research informs practice, which the agency disseminates to adoptive parents and professionals.

Adopted children and their families receive excellent adoption support, which is of a very high quality. This results in them making exceptional progress that significantly exceeds expectations. Children and families using the service, without exception, report that the therapy has achieved positive changes in their lives. Families are more stable and family relationships improve. Children who previously were completely disengaged in family and peer relationships are now making progress in school and are engaging in family life. An adopter complimented the service, stating, 'Their support has really been exceptional. We wouldn't have got as far as we have without them.'

Adopters speak very positively about the service that they receive and feel that the therapists' involvement makes a significant difference to their lives. They wholeheartedly believe that the support that they receive successfully prevents family breakdown and disruption. One adopter commented, 'I feel so much more confident now. I recognise [my child's] triggers and understand his behaviour now.' Another stated, 'This is the strongest our relationship has ever been. We're working much more as a team.'

Children are also very happy about the help that they receive from the service. One child commented, 'They listened to me and took my thoughts and feelings seriously.'

All the therapists are extremely skilled and experienced. They recognise how early trauma can damage children's lives. They understand that adopters undertake an extraordinary task, which may well require a high level of support. Many of the families who are referred to the service are at crisis point. As one local authority post adoption support worker commented, 'This service successfully engages families when other services have been unable to. They will do everything they can to prioritise referrals and ensure that families receive support as soon as possible.'

The agency provides a prompt, welcoming service that is professional and focused on the needs of the child and adoptive family. From their first point of contact with the agency, families experience a 'trusting therapeutic hand' to guide them. When they are unable to offer a service due to their location, staff ensure that families are signposted to appropriate local services and advocate on their behalf with local authorities. They provide comprehensive written information to local authorities to support funding applications to ensure that waiting times for families are minimal.

All therapists are appropriately qualified and experienced to deliver a range of therapeutic interventions, including dyadic developmental psychotherapy. From January 2017, the service has also offered therapeutic life story work.

Families feel involved with the service. At the start of process, therapists spend time getting to know the children and their family. They spend time in the child's school observing and hearing the teacher's perspective. This helps to build a 'shared narrative' with the family. Adoptive parents value the intervention and feel it makes a significant impact on their lives. One adoptive parent commented, 'I now parent completely differently. The work has totally transformed my approach.' Therapists share their knowledge in school and the wider family. As a result, families and professionals understand the change in parenting approach and support the child more effectively. One adoptive parent commented that the intervention made a considerable difference. She said, '[The therapist] went above and beyond. Having a clinical psychologist lead discussions with the school made such a difference in his school life.'

The therapeutic team members also work with other professionals within children services and education, disseminating their knowledge and skills through training courses and consultation. A social worker complimented the work undertaken by the agency, stating, 'The therapist inspired me to have confidence in my abilities... she has something extra, skill, knowledge and expertise. She has a style that makes people feel good, a really positive attitude and calm tone, she is not floppy or weak, she is very clear.'

Adoptive parents and children are aware of their right to make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the actions taken by the agency. Details about how to make a complaint are readily available. The agency has received one complaint since the last inspection. This concerned a gap in service provision following the unexpected resignation of a therapist. The manager took swift action to resolve the complaint and the family has continued to work with the agency. As a result of this complaint, the manager has extended the staff notice period. This shows that the manager learns from complaints and, when necessary, takes steps to improve the quality of service.

How well children, young people and adults are helped and protected: good

Parents are supported to develop a clear understanding about how their child's early life experiences have affected their emotional well-being and behaviour. The focus of the work of the agency is to help parents develop the strategies that they need to support their child to develop attachments and make improvements in their overall emotional well-being and behaviour.

Staff receive updated training in child protection from the local safeguarding board. They have a good understanding of safeguarding. Staff know how to respond if a child should disclose that they have been harmed. Safeguarding is also actively considered in supervision by managers and staff. However, although some staff members have increased their understanding of child sexual exploitation through working alongside specialist agencies supporting individual children, the staff training plan does not include child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. This means that staff's knowledge is limited in these areas; therefore, they may not be aware of the

significance of emerging patterns of behaviour and are unable to give up-to-date safeguarding guidance to their adoptive families.

All therapists ensure that service users are fully aware of the boundaries of confidentiality before they begin working with them. Consequently, service users understand that information of a safeguarding nature may have to be shared with other professionals. The manager is aware of how to respond to allegations and ensures that any historical allegations are handled sensitively and in accordance with procedures. The therapists are highly skilled at keeping the balance between a therapeutic relationship and ensuring that their safeguarding responsibilities are met. They are proactive in making referrals to statutory agencies when they identify concerns about missing from home episodes or parental behaviour. The manager maintains comprehensive safeguarding records, which help her monitor and evaluate patterns of safeguarding referrals and their outcomes. Therapists work constructively alongside specialist agencies to ensure that they effectively contribute to the child's safeguarding plan.

All therapists complete comprehensive risk assessments at the start of their work with a family. These are informed by local authority assessments and information from schools and referring social workers. The risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated after any safeguarding concern.

All staff have undergone the necessary recruitment checks to help ensure that they are suitable to work with children and young people. The staff files are well organised. However, gaps in the telephone verification of references were identified at inspection. The manager has acknowledged this shortfall and took immediate steps to address this.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is very experienced. She is a Chartered Clinical Psychologist, Chartered Scientist, and an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, on the Register of Approved Psychology Practice Supervisors and is regulated by the Health Care Professions Council. She is a published author and disseminates her work nationally. The manager is suitably experienced and qualified. She is an inspirational and visionary leader who has over 14 years' experience working with adults and children with psychological difficulties.

The manager has a clear vision for the agency's development. She is passionate about supporting children and adults affected by the trauma of neglect and abuse.

Since the last inspection, the agency has grown from being a single provider to now employing five clinical psychologists, one therapeutic life story worker, one counselling psychologist and one Office Manager. All are suitably qualified and experienced. All psychologists are registered with the Health Care Professions Council.

Supervision arrangements for both the manager and staff are excellent. The manager employs suitably qualified independent consultants to provide both her own

clinical supervision and management consultation. All staff receive high levels of clinical supervision and regular professional appraisals. Sessions are highly reflective and well recorded. Staff appreciate the support that they receive. One staff member commented, 'I am incredibly well supported. Both supervision and appraisals are non-judgemental, encouraging and constructive.' The staff receive good-quality training to ensure that their professional practice development needs are met. Training needs are identified during individual supervision meetings and appraisals.

The agency has developed a comprehensive range of outcome measures to evaluate the effectiveness of their service. These include the use of standardised measures to understand and assess the impact of their therapeutic interventions on children and families. Every clinical case is evaluated using before and after measures. Parents and children also complete a satisfaction questionnaire at the end of their work. These provide managers with an excellent understanding of the effectiveness of the work. These are consistently reviewed in leadership meetings to inform the development of the service. Parents and children consistently comment on the positive difference TCPS made to their lives.

The manager has an ambitious and achievable three-year development plan. This includes the employment of two additional therapists each year and an expansion of the service to include group work. The agency has recently successfully won a research tender with a local authority to identify 'best practice' in Pupil Premium Plus spending in the authority's special schools.

The managers and staff are well aware of the need to promote equality and diversity in everything that they do. Adopted children often face oppressive attitudes in their daily lives, so anti-discriminatory practice is integral to the agency's success.

The agency has a very clear and well-written statement of purpose, which explains the ethos of the service. Children and young people have their own colourful guide to the services and support available to them.

The manager and team have exceptionally good working relationships with commissioners and referring social workers. They are able to effectively challenge practice while maintaining constructive working relationships with referring authorities. The agency has learned from previous experiences when local authorities' funding extension applications have been delayed. The agency now builds in mid-way reviews to ensure that continuity and contingency plans are in place to prevent any disruptions in services to children.

The two recommendations made at the last inspection have both been met. The agency safeguarding policy has now been shared with the local safeguarding board. The policy now includes historic abuse allegations, adult safeguarding concerns and duties under Prevent.

Information about this inspection

During this inspection, inspectors looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, young people and adults. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children, young people and adults. They watched how professional staff work with children, young people, adults and each other and discussed the effectiveness of the help provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people, adults and their families. In addition, inspectors have tried to understand what the adoption support agency knows about how well it is performing and what difference it is making for the children, young people and adults whom it is trying to help.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, using the 'Social care common inspection framework', to assess the effectiveness of the adoption support agency, how it meets the core functions as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005 and the national minimum standards.

Adoption support agency details

Unique reference number: SC470742

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Inspector

Anne Daly, social care inspector



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