

An Independent Social Work/Play Therapy Service

1 Beacon Mews, South Road, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 9DZ
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this adoption support agency

This is a small agency, based in Surrey, which provides adoption support services to children and their parents through play therapy. The agency does not work with birth family members, nor with adopted adults who are seeking birth records, counselling or intermediary services.

The service is operated by a sole provider who offers therapy to children in adoptive families. The provider has contractual arrangements with several local authorities to provide adoption support and staff and adoption panel members' training.

The provider has contractual arrangements with several other therapists to ensure that support is provided locally to children and their families.

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 March 2018

Overall experience and progress of service users, taking into account:	outstanding
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How well children, young people and adults are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 21 March 2015

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This adoption support agency is outstanding because:

- Children and their parents love coming to this adoption support agency. They find the provider welcoming, fun and non-judgemental and value the service highly.
- The provider is highly responsive to the needs of children and their families, and the support is specifically and carefully tailored to the needs of each child.
- Outcomes are agreed with children and their families and progress is measures against these, in a way that is transparent and understandable to the children involved. Children's progress and successes are celebrated, resulting in an improvement in their confidence and self-esteem.
- Children's wishes and feelings are central to the service offered and the provider adapts her approach in accordance with these.
- Inter-agency communication is excellent and the provider ensures, within the remit of confidentiality, that professionals understand the child's needs and progress and ensure that these are of central consideration.
- The service provided helps to reduce the risk of family breakdown and minimises further trauma for adopted children and their families.
- The agency is exceptionally well managed and monitoring by the provider is meticulous.
- The provider makes a real and positive difference to the lives of children and their families and the outcomes achieved are exceptional.

The adoption support agency's areas for development:

- The design of the children's guide to adoption support is basic, and for some children a more detailed description of the service offered would be beneficial.

Inspection judgement

Overall experiences and progress of service users: outstanding

Children and their adoptive parents are exceptionally well supported by this agency. The service provides a highly responsive and flexible approach to adoption support. Families who have used this service report that this has changed their lives for the better. One parent said, 'The support we have been given has been a lifeline. Without this, we feel sure that our family would have fallen apart. We are now stronger and more resilient and the services we have been offered have enriched our lives completely.'

The provider offers a welcoming service that is professional, flexible and child-focused. Parents and children significantly influence the work carried out with them. The provider is sensitive to working with children and their families in a manner that enables them to fully engage, thus ensuring that they achieve the best possible outcomes. One social worker, in describing the provider's attributes, said: 'She really understands the children well. She understands their feelings and can almost see inside their minds.'

The provider has an excellent range of skills to use with children and is an accomplished author of books for children who are adopted. She demonstrates an impressive, up-to-date knowledge of adoption issues, and utilises established research in the impact of loss, trauma and abuse upon children's development and attachment and relationships. Through her work with children, the provider is able to help them reframe their past, and understand the impact that their past has on their well-being and behaviour, enabling them to begin to form emotional bonds with their adoptive family.

Children develop trusting relationships with the provider, and this forms the foundation from which children are able to begin to come to terms with some of their difficult feelings. Children are beginning to develop an understanding of how their past has affected them, and that this is not their fault. They learn to become more resilient and develop ways of coping with their sad and angry feelings. As a result, children's confidence and self-worth grow, and their relationships with their adoptive families improve.

Parents are actively involved in the work carried out with their children. This provides them with a deeper insight and understanding of the impact of their child's past adverse experiences and equips them with meaningful strategies to support them. One parent said, 'The strategies given to us were insightful, simple and highly effective. Putting a note in my child's pocket each day as she goes to school, telling her how much I love her, has helped my child to understand that she belongs to me and that I am always thinking about her. This has helped her to feel much more secure and valued.'

As a result of the progress made by their children, parents regain hope and

enthusiasm and themselves become more resilient. This is because they have been supported by the provider to gain a deeper insight into their children's needs, which enhances their ability to support, nurture and love their child.

One parent said, 'Without the support given, we would not have the happy loving child we see today. Our family is complete and our future together is exciting.'

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

The provider has an excellent understanding about safeguarding children and adults. She has developed a clear policy and comprehensive procedures in relation to safeguarding children and dealing with disclosures of historical abuse. The provider attends regular training and ensures that safeguarding is of central consideration in all aspects of her work. She demonstrates a detailed understanding of the risks of child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and the increased vulnerability of children who have suffered traumatic experiences in their past lives.

The provider has supported parents in their understanding of the impact of past trauma and experiences upon their children, and how this impacts upon their behaviour and emotional well-being. One parent said of the provider, 'She has helped me to understand that my child's more challenging behaviour is her means of telling me that she is feeling sad and confused about her past.' The provider supports parents to develop ways of dealing with their child's behaviour more effectively, which results in a reduction in the child's vulnerabilities because parents are better able to keep their child safe.

The provider has established strong working relationships with professionals from referring agencies and local authority social work teams. The provider has also worked closely with education providers to ensure a consistency of approach when dealing with children's more challenging behaviour, and to ensure that teachers and other professionals develop a deeper understanding of the needs and vulnerabilities of children who are adopted.

While there have been no safeguarding matters which have required escalation to safeguarding agencies, the provider is clear about the processes to be followed. The provider has also ensured that parents and children understand the concept of confidentiality and the circumstances in which it is necessary to share information with the appropriate authorities.

There have been no complaints or expressions of dissatisfaction with any aspect of the service offered by the provider; however, those using the service are clear that should they have a cause to complain, this would be dealt with professionally and appropriately.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The provider is appropriately qualified and experienced to offer the service. She is passionate and absolutely committed to improving the lives of the children and families with whom she works. The provider ensures that children's needs are at the centre of her practice and is extremely skilled in balancing the needs of children with those of their adoptive families.

The provider works in close partnership with a number of local authorities. One local authority representative described the provider as 'highly professional, responsive and reliable and the outcomes she achieves for the children and their families are simply fantastic.'

Records relating to children and their families are well maintained and are written in such a manner as to be sensitive to children's needs should they wish to access these in the future. The provider is aware that her records form part of a child's adoption journey, and the language used is sensitive to this.

Records are stored safely and confidentiality is of utmost importance to the provider.

The provider receives regular clinical supervision of which detailed records are kept. Clinical supervision is not used as a decision-making forum, but as a means of reflecting upon the provider's practice, linking this to theory, current research and thinking, and for the exploration of strategies for improving the outcomes for children and their families.

The service has a clear statement of purpose, which describes the service in language that is meaningful to children and their families. The document outlines the values and ethos of the service and the manner in which it is to be provided.

The provider invites those who have used her service to provide evaluative feedback, both formally and informally. Feedback records are devised specifically for children and are designed to help them to think carefully about the impact the provider has upon their lives and their feelings. One child described the provider as someone who thinks that she is important, and that her feelings are important. The child described her work with the provider as great fun, and said that she loves her sessions. The child said that she feels that the provider has 'really helped me to understand myself and why some things in my life have happened. This makes me and Mummy feel better.'

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: SC066883

Registered provider: An Independent Social Work/Play Therapy Service

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Inspector:

Jacqueline Georghiou, social care inspector



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