

Gateway Psychology

Gateway Psychology Limited

7–9 the Boulevard, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6BD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this adoption support agency

Gateway Psychology Limited is a private 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, consultation and training for those working with them.

The agency employs six clinical psychologists and a psychological therapist to provide services for the agency. In addition, four psychologists and a family therapist are contracted as 'associates' to provide additional capacity when needed.

In the last year, Gateway Psychology has worked directly with 67 adoptive families.

Inspection dates: 25 to 27 September 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 Good

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: 14 July 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:

- The agency provides high-quality therapeutic services.
- Parents and children love coming to the agency. They find it welcoming, non-judgemental and they highly value the service.
- Families are treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity. They feel that they are listened to and that the therapists are committed to making a positive difference in their lives.
- The agency has developed a therapeutic re-parenting programme that has a positive impact on children's lives.
- Their work helps to reduce the risk of family breakdown and further trauma for children.
- The agency places a high priority on keeping children safe. Therapists have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and they adopt a multi-agency approach to ensuring that children are helped and protected.
- Managers and staff are committed to improving the lives of children and their families. Staff are well supported by regular supervision and ongoing personal development.

The adoption support agency's areas for development:

- The registered manager does not ensure that all staff supply written employment references.
- The statement of purpose does not accurately reflect the number of staff employed, their qualifications or experience.
- The staff training plan is not effectively evaluated to ensure that staff awareness of child sexual exploitation and radicalisation is addressed.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person/s must take to meet 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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person shall compile in relation to the agency a written statement which shall consist of a statement as to the matters listed in Schedule 1 ('statement of purpose'). The Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005 (Regulation 5(1))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that the statement of purpose accurately reflects the number of staff working at the agency, their qualifications and experience.</p>	<p>12/11/2018</p>

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)

This is in specific reference to ensuring that two written references, preferably one from current employer, are received.
- Ensure 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 awareness training.

Inspection judgement

Overall experiences and progress of service users: outstanding

Children and families using this agency receive an outstanding service. Current and appropriate research informs its practice, which in turn informs advice provided to adoptive parents and professionals.

The therapists are exceptionally skilled and are often able to provide support and help when other services have not succeeded. The therapists recognise how much early trauma can disturb and disrupt children's emotional and behavioural development. They understand that adopters undertake an extraordinarily challenging task and that they may require a high level of support. Many of the families who are referred to the service are at crisis point. In many cases, the support and advice families receive prevents family breakdown. As one adoptive parent stated, '[It's] a lifesaver. She [the therapist] just got what we were going through. I felt comfortable to share my story and to be honest about my emotions. I didn't feel judged.'

The agency provides a professional, prompt and welcoming service that is focused on the needs of the child and their family. Therapists work from a specially designed base offering child-friendly therapy rooms and training facilities. When they are unable to offer a service, 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 applications for financial resources from the Adoption Support Fund and this helps to ensure that waiting times for families are minimal. When applications for funding have not been processed in a timely manner, the manager has been assertive with local authorities to expedite this. Had she not done this, families would have been left with limited or no support and at increased risk of crisis.

Children and families experience consistency in relationships with the therapists who offer help and support. All therapists are appropriately qualified and experienced to deliver a range of therapeutic interventions.

The agency succeeds in building up trust and confidence with children and their families. Staff are responsive and accessible, and families feel helped by the timeliness of therapeutic assessments. Therapeutic staff consider a range of approaches in efforts to offer the most appropriate support. They are skilled in providing a range of attachment and trauma focused interventions, including dyadic developmental psychotherapy, Theraplay (R) and Non Violent Resistance. Therapists collaborate with children's networks, helping them to improve relationships with parents, carers and siblings. One parent said, 'She [the therapist] has been absolutely fantastic. She genuinely wants to help and make a difference. She has given me strategies to use that are making a real difference. Without her involvement we wouldn't have survived as a family.'

The agency has developed a therapeutic re-parenting training course for parents of children who have experienced trauma, neglect and abuse. The course runs both in the daytime and the evening to offer the greatest accessibility to parents. It is facilitated by two clinical psychologists and utilises the latest research in attachment theory and the impact of early experiences on a child's brain development. Feedback from parents and commissioners is consistently positive. One parent, evaluating the impact of the training six months after completion, stated, 'The changes before and after training is amazing. My family is stronger than ever. My relationships with my children are closer. I never thought training would have made such a difference.'

Parents said that their family relationships have improved enormously since their therapy began. Children show marked improvements in their behaviour and stability. This has a significant and positive impact on children's life chances. One child, when asked by the inspector to explain what difference the therapy was making to his life, simply said, 'We used to shout at each other and now we don't. I feel much happier now.'

Outcomes for children and families using this service are outstanding. There are many examples where therapy has helped to prevent adoptive placements from breaking down and helped to maintain a relationship between children and their parents. Other areas of progress reported are lower levels of conflict in children and families, and changes to parents' perceptions.

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.

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

All the therapists have an excellent understanding of how children's previous experiences of trauma and abuse affect their behaviour. They support parents 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.

The therapists receive updated training in child protection from the local safeguarding board. They have a good understanding of safeguarding and know how to respond if a child discloses that they have been harmed. 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, for example about potentially exploitive relationships 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.

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 or radicalisation. This means that staff's knowledge is limited in these areas. This means they may not be aware of the significance of emerging patterns of behaviour and are unable to give up-to-date safeguarding guidance to parents.

The manager is aware of how to respond to allegations. There has been one allegation received since the last inspection. This was appropriately managed in accordance with procedures.

Risk assessments are completed by therapists at the start of their work with a family. These are informed by local authority assessments and referring social workers. The risk assessments are regularly reviewed with children 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 written references were identified at inspection. The manager has acknowledged this shortfall and took steps to address this.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is very experienced. She is a chartered clinical psychologist, regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council. She is suitably experienced and qualified. She has over 11 years' experience working with adults and children who have psychological difficulties. She is a regular contributor to clinical psychology doctoral programmes.

The manager and directors have a clear vision for the agency's development. They are 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 with one clinical psychologist associate, to now employing six clinical psychologists, one psychology therapist and an expanded pool of associates that includes four psychologists and one family therapist. All are suitably qualified and experienced. All psychologists and therapists are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

Supervision arrangements for both the manager and staff are good. The manager commissions suitably qualified independent clinical psychologists to provide both her own and senior therapists with clinical supervision. All staff receive high levels of clinical supervision, regular line management supervision and professional appraisals.

Sessions are highly reflective. Staff appreciate the support that they receive. One staff member commented, 'There are opportunities for professional development and a variety of ways to enhance your own learning while providing a much-needed service to a range of clients in a range of ways.' 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 comprehensive quality assurance processes to support improvement. All service users are asked for feedback; this is reflected on and used to improve provision. For example, in recent feedback commissioners commented that it would be helpful if their referring social workers could attend the re-parenting training programme to enable them to support their families more effectively. The agency subsequently arranged two complimentary information days in July for referring workers to give them an overview of the programme. Managers complete regular, monthly reviews of the service that they provide and consider areas of strength and areas for development.

There is a statement of purpose that sets out the aims and objectives of the service. This document provides the reader with useful information about the services. However, it does not include an up-to-date list of staff, their qualifications or experience. An inaccurate statement of purpose has the potential to mislead those who read it. Children have their own guide to the services and support available to them.

The manager and team have developed good working relationships with commissioners and referring social workers. They can challenge practice effectively while maintaining constructive working relationships with referring authorities.

The two recommendations made at the last inspection have both been met. The agency has now developed a range of monitoring tools to evaluate the service effectively. The agency safeguarding policy has now been shared with the local safeguarding board.

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: SC481125

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Responsible individual: Dr Meryl Forse

Registered manager: Dr Meryl Forse

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Inspector

Anne Daly, social care inspector



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