

# CTC Psychological Services

The Partnership of CTC Psychological Services  
20 Walpole Street, Chester CH1 4HG  
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this adoption support agency

CTC Psychological Services is a limited liability partnership. It was registered to provide adoption support services in June 2014. It provides a range of psychological services to adults and children. Only the agency's adoption support work was considered as part of this inspection.

The agency employs several psychologists and counsellors, who undertake a range of work for the agency. The agency operates from a main office in Chester, but also has a small number of staff based in the Cumbria area. The agency provides psychological assessments and therapeutic interventions commissioned by local authorities to support children placed for adoption or adopted. At the time of the inspection, the agency was working with 57 children and their families.

**Inspection dates:** 9 to 11 October 2018

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

**requires improvement to be good**

requires improvement to be good

requires improvement to be good

The adoption support agency is not yet delivering effective services for children, young people and adults. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

**Date of last inspection:** 9 June 2015

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This adoption support agency requires improvement to be good because:

- The agency is yet to fully comply with the requirements required for an adoption support agency.
- Staff recruitment processes are not yet sufficiently robust.
- The agency is not operating in accordance with its own complaints procedure and no record is maintained of any complaints investigation undertaken.
- Those embarking on assessment or therapeutic work with the agency are unsure what to expect. Adoptive parents find it difficult to prepare their children for assessment and therapy.
- Local safeguarding bodies have yet to agree the agency's safeguarding procedures. Staff are sometimes unclear what action to take when an incident does occur.
- Many staff working for the agency are related. Whistle-blowing procedures do not indicate how to raise issues with an independent person in the agency, if there was a potential conflict of interest.
- Management oversight of records is weak. Case files are not routinely audited and do not reflect casework decision-making.

The adoption support agency's strengths:

- Many adoptive parents speak positively about the positive impact of therapy on their child. Some say that this has prevented placement breakdown.
- The agency is forward thinking. The registered manager is a skilled practitioner, who is invested in improving outcomes for adopted children.
- The agency is committed to providing training opportunities for staff. Staff are supported to develop individual areas of expertise.
- Staff receive regular supportive supervision.

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

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets 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
Ensure that the registered person keeps under review and, where appropriate, revises the statement of purpose and children's guide; and notifies the registration authority of any such revision within 28 days of making the revision. (Regulation 6(a)(b))	30/11/2018
Ensure that any complaint made under the complaints procedure is fully investigated. (Regulation 17(1))  Specifically, that a full record is maintained of any investigation undertaken and that the agency's practice reflects that outlined in its complaints procedure.	30/11/2018
Ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to each person employed to work for the purposes of the agency, in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2. (Regulation 19(2)(d))	30/11/2018

### Recommendations

- Ensure that the service user knows, and receives written information about the service they are to receive; what the service is designed to achieve; what is involved in the particular service provision and how the service will be monitored to ensure that it is delivering the intended outcome. (NMS 15.3)
- Ensure that there is a whistle-blowing policy which is made known to all staff and volunteers. This makes it a clear duty for such people to report to an appropriate authority any circumstances within the agency which they consider likely to significantly harm the safety, rights or welfare of any child placed by the service. (NMS 21.6)
- Ensure that all adoption support agency staff and volunteers understand what they must do if they receive an allegation or have a suspicion that a person may have:

- a) behaved in a way that has, harmed a child;
- b) possibly committed a criminal offence against a child; or
- c) behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children.

Ensure that the required action is taken in any relevant situations of which it is aware. (NMS 22.1)

- Ensure that the agency's child protection procedures are submitted for consideration and comment to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to ensure their compatibility. (NMS 22.4)
- Ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the agency to ensure compliance with the agency's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (NMS 25.2)
- Ensure that the agency has and implements a written policy that clarifies the purpose, format and content of information to be kept on the agency's files, on the child's and prospective adopters' case records. (NMS 27.1)

In particular, that separate records are maintained for adoptive parents and children; and that records reflect case discussion and decision-making.

## Inspection judgement

### **Overall experiences and progress of service users: requires improvement to be good**

The agency's involvement with a family often begins with a psychological assessment, at the request of the local authority. This is a key aspect of its work. The agency then frequently proceeds to provide the recommended therapeutic intervention. This may involve both the child and adoptive parent's engagement in therapy. This is sometimes a long-term commitment, with some families attending weekly for several years.

Without exception, all adoptive parents spoken to during the inspection were positive about the difference therapy had made to them. Examples of their comments include:

- 'Coming here has really made a difference. I don't know if we would still be together as a family without their help.'
- 'My therapist really understands me. I don't feel judged. It's difficult talking to other parents, as parenting an adopted child is different.'
- 'Therapy has really helped to boost my child's self-confidence.'
- 'Therapy has helped me review my responses to the children, as I can now see how I was not responding in the best way.'

Adoptive parents speak positively about the relationships between their child and the therapist involved. Therapists take time to build rapport and prove to the child that they can rely on them. However, unfortunately, inspectors were unable to speak directly to any children or young people during the inspection to confirm this.

Adoptive parents report being unclear about what would happen during assessment, or at the start of therapy. The agency's children's guide does not make this clear. Video clips that the agency has prepared for children were inaccessible on the agency's website. Consequently, adoptive parents are unable to allay children's anxieties about what will happen in advance of these sessions.

Similarly, the agency's objectives and criteria for success are unclear at the outset. No formal review process evaluates progress. Written review reports are only completed at the request of a commissioner or adoptive parent, otherwise the agency provide mainly verbal feedback.

The agency has a complaints procedure and does take complaints seriously. However, it is not currently investigating complaints in the manner described in its own procedure. Furthermore, the agency does not maintain a clear chronology of its investigation, making it difficult to see how its outcome has been reached.

The agency will provide advice and direction to social workers if requested, as well as teachers. This enables teaching staff to gain a better understanding of the child and their needs. This has been effective in maintaining children's school placements.

**How well children, young people and adults are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

Therapists are aware of the implications of a child's early life experiences. This includes neglect, abuse and multiple care givers, often resulting in attachment difficulties. Staff build trusting relationships with children during therapy, ensuring that children feel safe. This also allows them a safe place to talk about things that have happened in their past or are happening now. Similarly, adoptive parents spoke about feeling safe in their dealings with the agency.

The agency has a safeguarding procedure, but this has not been agreed by local safeguarding bodies, to ensure its compatibility with local protocols. Staff complete online safeguarding training. However, in the event of an incident they can become confused about the best course of action to take. This was observed during the inspection. In addition, records do not include sufficient detail about the actions taken by staff to ensure children's welfare. The manager is making plans for staff to receive taught safeguarding training soon, acknowledging the need for this.

Since the last inspection, the agency has introduced a whistle-blowing procedure. However, it remains unclear who staff should approach regarding concerns about senior staff in the agency. Many familial relationships within the agency complicate this. Details regarding an independent person are unclear, and staff were unaware that they could approach Ofsted to share their concerns.

Shortfalls in the agency's staff recruitment processes were identified at this inspection, such as not taking references from the individual's most recent employer; not seeking verification why employment has ended when an individual has previously worked with children, or vulnerable adults; and failing to identify gaps in employment histories. This does not ensure the integrity of those working for the agency.

**The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

The registered manager is a partner in the agency. She is an experienced psychotherapist. She has worked in the field of trauma, with children and families, for many years and is respected for her expertise. She also has a suitable management qualification. She demonstrates a commitment to providing high-quality adoption support services. She reflects on the agency's practice and considers innovative ways of working.

Staff are positive about working for the agency and the learning gained from working alongside such experienced practitioners. Staff receive good-quality supervision and

support. This includes clinical supervision in their area of expertise, as well as group supervision to share skills and ideas. The agency keeps a central record of casework discussion and decisions. However, this does not form part of the child's case record. Therefore, decision-making is unclear.

A case recording policy has been adopted since the last inspection. However, separate records are not maintained for children and their adoptive parents, despite records containing confidential information pertaining to only one party. Furthermore, records were of variable quality and did not always contain detail of contact made with third parties. Case records are not audited, allowing the above shortfalls to have gone unnoticed.

The statement of purpose illustrates the aims of the agency and reflects the service that the agency provides. However, despite revision since the last inspection, a copy was not sent to Ofsted, as required. In addition, despite the availability of several leaflets for children about the agency, these do not constitute a children's guide to adoption support, as outlined in the regulations. This would help children understand that others are in a similar position to themselves, and what to expect from the agency, as well as who to contact if they are unhappy and need to speak to someone.

The agency is eager to improve. The registered manager has acted on most of the recommendations made at the last inspection. The agency also seeks its own feedback from service users with a view to developing the agency.

## **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:** SC478850

**Registered provider:** The Partnership of CTC Psychological Services

**Registered provider address:** 20 Walpole Street, Chester CH1 4HG

**Responsible individual:** Julian Long

**Registered manager:** Jeanie McIntee

**Telephone number:** 01224 390121

**Email address:** [admin@ctcps.co.uk](mailto:admin@ctcps.co.uk)

### **Inspector**

Mandy Williams, social care inspector





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