

# 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 and undertakes therapeutic work with families. 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.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### Inspection dates: 1 and 2 March 2022

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

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

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:** 13 February 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## **Inspection judgement**

### **Overall experiences and progress of service users: outstanding**

Children and their adoptive families receive exceptional adoption support from the very first contact they have with the agency. Adopters are provided with information about the help they will receive and have access to a short video about who their allocated therapist will be. This helps to provide reassurance to adopters and their children.

The agency works collaboratively with other professionals involved with the children, including education services and children's social workers, to inform initial assessments. Consequently, therapists have a deep understanding of children's adoption journeys and life experiences. This information is used to make suggestions to other professionals about how best to support the children.

Initial assessments are effective in identifying the focus of therapy and enable individualised and tailored support to be offered to adopters. The support offered by the allocated therapist is underpinned by research and a strong understanding of how childhood trauma affects children's emotions, developmental needs and relationships. The support given to adopters helps them to gain a deeper understanding of their child's early life experiences and how they have affected them. As a result, adopters are more informed and have improved relationships with their children.

Therapists have provided support plans to teachers to inform them as to how they should work with children. They have delivered training to schools to ensure that they have a more therapeutic approach and are more trauma-informed. Therapists regularly contribute to children's education, health and care plans. As a direct result of the therapists' work outside the therapeutic sessions, some children have been able to access specialist educational provision that specifically meets the children's needs. This is because the therapists are instrumental in advocating for children and their parents, ensuring that they get the right service tailored to their needs. This results in children making exceptional progress in all areas of their lives.

To assist adopters' engagement with the service, therapeutic sessions are conducted in the adopter's own home. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency provided online sessions to ensure that adopters continued to receive the support they needed. This proved to be successful and has resulted in the agency continuing to offer online sessions for some adopters. Adopters reported that the quality of support remained high, despite the impact of COVID-19, and that support was invaluable during this time. One adopter told the inspector, 'It was a lifeline.'

Adopters and children using the service were overwhelmingly positive about the therapy they receive and say that it has had a significant benefit in their lives. One

adopter described receiving a 'gold standard' of support. A child told the inspector that his therapist provided them with 'invaluable strategies'. All children spoken to shared that the service had a positive impact on their life.

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

Therapists are skilled at equipping adopters with strategies to help them manage their child's behaviours. Adopters have become more therapeutically aware in their parenting styles and use the provider's approved model of care to help them with behaviour management strategies. Adopters told the inspector that they have learned about what their child is trying to communicate when they behave in a particular way. This has had a positive impact on some family relationships.

All therapists complete risk assessments before starting work with adopters. These assessments are regularly reviewed and updated. The assessments evidence how risks are reduced over the time the therapist works with the adoptive family.

Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. This equips them with the required knowledge about safeguarding risks, such as exploitation, children going missing from home, radicalisation and other contextual safeguarding risks. Staff have completed additional training in non-violent resistance training to support children who have aggressive, violent, controlling and self-destructive behaviour. This helps inform the therapists' work in the agency and external services that the agency works with.

The agency has clear safeguarding processes in place. Staff have an excellent knowledge of these and follow them if needed. Staff are explicit in their concerns when making referrals to local authorities and meticulously follow up any referrals made to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.

Staff are alert to possible and actual safeguarding risks which may affect children who use the service or other children that they may come into contact with outside the agency. Any potential concerns are recorded and monitored in a central log and an action plan is implemented. This allows for low-risk concerns to be monitored and escalated if necessary. Safeguarding is a standard topic discussed in every staff supervision and in monthly team meetings. This demonstrates that protecting children and families is at the forefront of practice.

The agency has improved its recruitment processes since the last inspection. The safer recruitment policy has been updated and details the improvements made, including verifying any references sought. Staff have attended safer recruitment training.

Adopters understand how to complain should they need to. However, due to the excellent relationships built between families and staff they are confident and feel safe to offer professional challenge should they need to.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The registered manager is an expert in her field of work. She is a published author and disseminates her work and knowledge nationally. The registered manager is suitably experienced and qualified. Her knowledge and experience of working with adults and children with psychological difficulties are exceptional. She has developed a service that is outstanding and in constant demand because of the high standard of work delivered.

The registered manager has been consistent in her aim to achieve exceptional outcomes for children and adopters. Since the last inspection, the staff team has grown from eight to 18 staff. The team is made up of 13 clinical psychologists, one assistant psychologist, one occupational therapist, an office manager, an administrator and a marketing assistant. This expansion is in response to the need to help more families, to try and reduce waiting lists and to offer a wider range of support.

Feedback from families and staff is used to inform the future development of the agency. This demonstrates that the registered manager is continually striving to improve and expand the service while maintaining excellent quality.

The agency has effective monitoring tools in place to measure children and adopters' outcomes. Before and after measures are used with families to gain this understanding. Children and adopters are fully involved in this work. These measures are reviewed by the senior leadership team and ensure that therapeutic work is having the desired outcomes.

The members of the staff team are committed to their roles and staff turnover is low. This is because staff feel valued and invested in by the registered manager. This level of commitment is also reflected in how families feel in relation to the staff who work with them. One adopter told the inspector: 'We trust in the support. We have had invaluable care and have been invested in.'

The members of the staff team are highly experienced and skilled. They receive ongoing training and professional development. Training is effective and informative and directly links to the service they provide. Staff have regular supervision that informs and supports their practice. The service promotes and encourages a high standard of reflective practice and allows staff to feel safe in their practice. All staff are registered with the appropriate professional bodies.

The provider works in close partnership with several local authorities. The feedback gathered from social workers echoes the positive feedback received throughout the inspection. One social worker advised that the agency is always her preferred choice because of the high standard of work that they produce.

The agency is involved in research trials in relation to the effective use of Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy with children. Therapists from the agency provide supervision and training to local authority social workers to help them deliver

trauma-informed practice to the children they work with. In addition to supporting other services such as schools to understand the impact of mental health in children, the agency's involvement in other services is not only beneficial to a wide range of children; it also provides development opportunities to the staff in the agency to widen their experience and practice.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, young people and adults, using the social care common inspection framework.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 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

**Registered provider:** The Child Psychology Service C.I.C

**Registered provider address:** PO Box 7539, Lichfield WS14 4NF

**Responsible individual:** Amber Elliott

**Registered manager:** Amber Elliott

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### **Inspector**

Lisa O'Donovan, Social Care Inspector

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