

Gateway Psychology

Registered provider: 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.

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 July 2022

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 September 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgement

Overall experiences and progress of service users: outstanding

Highly skilled managers and staff use research-based practice and a wide range of therapies to support children and adopters to build and sustain their relationships. This helps build emotional resilience and provides long-term stability for children.

Managers and staff are exceptionally responsive and inclusive in their approach to the children and adopters who access their service. As a result, children and adopters feel welcomed. Adopters comment positively about the first contact they have with the service and the comprehensive level of information they receive. Similarly, adopters say that this quality of support continues in subsequent training sessions, assessments and any therapy they then go on to receive.

Thorough assessments are undertaken by highly skilled qualified staff. Managers continue to look for new ways to develop staff and innovate new assessment skills. This includes staff attending training in new methods and then introducing these alongside existing assessment processes. This ensures that therapeutic intervention is targeted to the specific needs of children and adopters.

Careful planning and early discussions with children, adoptive parents, social workers and schools ensures that children and their families access services in a timely way. There have been occasions when managers have paid for adopters to attend training before funding has been received.

Managers ensure that therapists are carefully matched to a child or adopter's individual needs. Children are carefully matched with therapists who have a shared understanding of their cultural identity. This has helped one child to explore her heritage and talk about her life experiences. On rare occasions when children have requested a change to their therapist, this has been accommodated.

Therapists are responsive to children's individual and complex needs. For example, one child brings his dog to his therapy sessions to help him self-regulate. This child-centred practice supports the building of strong therapeutic relationships. Therapists are extremely flexible and go above and beyond. For example, a therapist is meeting a parent and their child in a park near their home as they cannot access the office for health reasons. The parent said this flexibility is ensuring that she and her child get the support they need.

Children and adopters receive support in times of crisis, which extends beyond the therapy sessions. Adoptive parents and children have access to their therapist through calls, texts and emails. This accessibility is reassuring and provides valuable support and guidance in times of need.

Training for adopters is an outstanding feature of this organisation. It is based on up-to-date research and tailored to the specific needs of adopters and their families.

This enables adopters to build their knowledge, confidence and capacity to meet the developing needs of their children. As a result, adopters feel empowered to parent. This means that children benefit from belonging with families who understand their previous life experiences and their developing needs.

Children's and adopters' views are highly valued by managers and staff. There are clear and accessible complaints procedures and regular consultation. The provider has been creative in gaining children's feedback. In the reception area, there are tubes that children drop balls into to share how they feel after each therapy session. All feedback from children, adopters and partner agencies is collated and used to inform future practice. A child requested specific art materials, which the therapist sourced in time for their next sessions. This helped the child feel they are listened to.

Managers and staff are actively involved in engaging with the wider adoption sector. For example, they have delivered training to the consortium of voluntary adoption agencies (CVAA). This dissemination of up-to-date research with partner agencies shows excellent collaborative working and shared practice.

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

The well-being and safety of children and adopters is paramount. Everyone across the agency has a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, through regularly reviewed policies and procedures and informative training. An established multi-agency approach ensures that there is close partnership working. Managers and staff fulfil their statutory responsibilities to safeguard children and they have systems in place that enable them to provide strong oversight. This ensures that any emerging concerns are quickly identified and reported to statutory agencies, prioritising children's safety.

Adopters are supported through the challenges that parenting can bring. They are helped to develop a better understanding of potential risks to children and recognise signs of concern in children's presentation and behaviour. This understanding and learning is threaded throughout training and therapy sessions. As a result, adopters are helped to provide nurturing homes for children, with consistent boundaries which encourage positive experiences and celebrate progress.

The recruitment of staff is thorough. This helps to ensure that children are not placed at risk through contact with unsuitable adults.

Therapists undertake risk assessments as part of the initial arrangements for any work with a child. Risk assessments are updated when new information is received. This ensures that any risks are known and understood, and work is carried out safely.

All staff, including non-clinical staff, receive training in safeguarding. Line managers work with individual staff and therapists to ensure that they have the necessary skills to manage risks or concerns that come to light during a therapeutic relationship.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Managers have a clear understanding of what constitutes excellence and innovation. Their monitoring is comprehensive and robust. This helps drive excellent practice. They are reflective in their approach to any issues that arise, to improve practice. They work collaboratively with other professionals and partners so that adopters and children experience sustained positive outcomes.

There is dynamic use of audit and consultation to support service development. These are reported on in the annual report, which then informs a detailed development plan that is regularly reviewed. This means that managers and staff are aware of emerging patterns and trends and are best placed to respond to them. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, they moved to online therapy, assessments and training. This was a success and, as a result, additional online training was introduced in 2021 and continues to be expanded.

Managers create the right environment for reflective practice to take place and are supportive of staff's individual development opportunities. All therapists receive regular clinical supervision as well as regular line-management supervision. This ensures that staff have constant opportunities to review and reflect on their practice. They attend team meetings and professional development sessions that enable them to build on their expertise and safeguarding practice.

New staff feel welcomed. They describe an informative and supportive induction process. Staff commented that managers are approachable and accessible, and that they feel their views are listened to and valued. Managers are strongly committed to ensuring that staff have the experience and skills required for all aspects of their specialist roles. This includes supporting staff to undertake advanced training in a variety of disciplines and therapies. This means adopters and children are well supported by staff with an exceptional skills base.

Managers have used their knowledge of the sector, research and marketing to develop the therapy they offer, and their own training courses and webinars. For example, they have designed a new course for parents of pre-teens and teenagers focusing on teenage brain development and the impact this has on their behaviours. In addition, they have trained staff and introduced a new therapy for children, which helps them to work with children with sensory needs. This ensure that the agency is at the heart of new developments.

A real skill of this agency is their attention to detail with staff, adopters and children. All new staff are welcomed at their desk with an initialled mug full of chocolates and a welcome card. During the pandemic, adopters were provided with a helpful guide containing tips to survive the lockdown. Children were provided with information

about the pandemic, helpful tips and information about the change from face-to-face to online therapy. All participants in an online training course are sent a kit through the post which contains beverages, chocolates, a bath bomb and a medal.

Partnership working is an exceptional strength of this agency. Feedback to inspectors from commissioners, social workers and adoptive parents during the inspection was wholly positive. Strengths include flexibility, responsiveness and communication. This positive approach to partners ensures that these key relationships are effective and support excellent outcomes for children.

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: SC481125

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Inspectors

Dawn Bennett, Social Care Inspector
Shazana Jamal, Social Care Inspector

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