

# Chrysalis Associates

Chrysalis Associates Limited

48 Wostenholm Road, Sheffield S7 1LL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this adoption support agency

Chrysalis Associates registered as an adoption support agency in 2008. The agency specialises in the assessment and treatment of developmental trauma and attachment difficulties. Its multidisciplinary therapeutic team offers services to adopted children or looked after children and their adoptive parents or carers. Families receive an individually designed service, tailored to their needs, which is drawn from a variety of therapeutic models. The agency has four directors and employs a team of 19 therapeutic staff, comprising clinical and counselling psychologists, occupational therapists, art therapist and social workers. At the time of this inspection, the agency was working with approximately 27 children and their families as well as adult adoptees. In the last 12 months, the agency has worked with a total of 161 children and their families.

### Inspection dates: 25 to 27 April 2023

<b>Overall experience and progress of service users, taking into account</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
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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:** 29 October 2019

**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 parents are exceptionally well supported by this agency. Since the previous inspection, high-quality adoption support has been sustained and improved. Leaders continue to strengthen, improve and innovate services to benefit children and their families. This intervention is instrumental in keeping families together. Families who have used this service report that this has changed their lives for the better. One adopter said, 'They wrap arms around us with their care and are always there. We now understand our child's needs better.'

The agency excels in the prompt, responsive and creative adoption support provided. Service users are clear about the purpose of the service they are receiving. This is because the agency provides comprehensive written information in a variety of leaflets. This is supplemented by ongoing discussions throughout the intervention. The voice of the children and their families influences service delivery. For example, children contribute to formulating interview questions for new employees. This shows children that their voice is important.

The agency was quick to review its practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and moved swiftly to provide therapy and therapeutic parenting groups online. In addition, the agency quickly developed a support group (Rainbow Group) to help children with the educational challenges they were facing during that time. This group has evolved and continues to date.

Children receive therapy that is tailored to their individual needs. The agency's therapeutic approach is well planned and very well evidenced in terms of its success. Practice is innovative, and the agency works well with various universities in publishing research papers in relevant subjects such as attachment, neurodiversity and developmental trauma. This means that the therapy provided is well assured for its suitability and is highly effective at improving the quality of the lives of those who use the service.

Assessments are thorough and evidence based. They clearly identify the needs to be met and form a strong basis for the therapy that is to be provided. This therapy is highly child focused and individualised. As a result of carrying out research with universities, the agency has developed a unique therapeutic approach which considers neurodiversity and how it relates to developmental trauma. Outcomes are scientifically measured and reviewed regularly. This meticulous tracking ensures that children and families achieve positive outcomes.

Therapists forge strong relationships with parents. Parents have fed back that they feel it is often children who require support rather than themselves. However, the strength of the relationships forged enables the therapists to support the parent to make changes to their own parenting style. This is done through direct sessions with

the parent and modelling behaviours during sessions with children. This helps to ensure that children and families receive the right support.

The agency has established strong working relationships with professionals from referring agencies, health and local authority social work teams. The agency works closely with education providers to ensure a consistent approach when dealing with children's more complex behaviour. This ensures that teachers and other professionals develop a deeper understanding of the needs and vulnerabilities of children who are adopted.

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

Arrangements to safeguard children and adult service users are effective. Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding in which systems are robust and rigorous. Staff are trained effectively. They were able to talk readily to the inspector about the culture of keeping children safe. The agency is constantly reviewing policies and procedures to ensure that children are kept safe.

High priority is given to all aspects of the agency's work, which ensures that children are helped to stay safe. All safeguarding matters are dealt with promptly and effectively. There is excellent partnership working with local authorities and other agencies to safeguard children. These highly effective links with other safeguarding bodies ensure that children are better protected from harm. In addition, the agency ensures that if there are any safeguarding concerns in relation to adopters, they are fully supported while the issues are being considered.

The agency makes sure that adopters understand the impact of abuse and neglect on children's emotional well-being and behaviour. Adopters are supported to manage this appropriately. They display a high level of understanding about these issues and take timely action so that situations do not escalate. The agency also helps adopters understand and support children on various issues, including self-harm and internet safety. This enables adopters to ensure that children use social networking sites safely.

The agency uses rigorous recruitment procedures to help ensure that all staff are safe and competent to work with children. Leaders and managers ensure that all necessary employment checks and verification processes are carried out for new members of staff. This helps to reduce the risk of harm to children.

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

Leadership and management of the agency are very strong. The leadership has maintained an outstanding quality of adoption support since the last inspection. Managers have sustained a culture of using research in practice. The links that have developed in the wider sector support the managers' drive for excellence. The agency is a key stakeholder in adoption services regionally, nationally and internationally. This has led to the dissemination of research-informed adoption

practice developments, leading innovative developments across a range of therapeutic assessment models. The extensive commitment to research and innovation ensures that the agency is at the heart of new developments. This means that the agency's practice is current and rigorously based on current research-derived evidence.

The leader's self-evaluation of the agency's strengths and aspects that need to improve further is sound. Staff at all levels continuously reflect and are very self-aware, seeking to improve practice wherever possible. Staff report that managers were resilient but flexible during the COVID-19 pandemic. They showed care and compassion but were alert to their important safeguarding role.

The agency staff are highly skilled, experienced, and competent. Regular team meetings, supervision sessions and team days enable staff to reflect and develop their practice. All staff receive annual appraisals. The agency has extremely efficient, committed, and competent administrative staff, who can provide excellent support to the agency. This greatly enhances the efficiency and quality of the service.

The agency has embedded a culture that embraces diversity at every level of the workforce. An innovative recruitment drive has ensured that the agency has attracted more staff from ethnic minority groups. This has had a positive effect. Referrals for support from ethnic minority adopters have increased. Staff feel confident to discuss sensitive topics with peers and management. In addition, the manager sits on various bodies nationally and internationally, which includes the Committee for Diversity, Belonging, Equity and Inclusion. Her expertise in this field brings cohesion to the agency.

The agency's statement of purpose is clear and detailed. It is well supported by additional information leaflets given to children and adults who use the service. The agency's operation is underpinned by a range of suitable policies and procedures. It operates from suitable premises and has systems in place to maintain the security and confidentiality of records of the sensitive work done.

Records relating to children and their families are well maintained. Staff are aware that records form part of a child's adoption journey, and the language used is sensitive to this. This means that the records are helpful to the children should they wish to access these in the future.

The fact that the agency offers outstanding adoption support has not deterred it from striving to improve key aspects of provision over time. The recent opening of a new office provides testament to this. This is in response to the increasingly high demand for the service. This means that children and adult service users will not have to travel a considerable distance to access the required support.

Partnership working is an exceptional strength of this agency. Feedback to the inspector from commissioners, social workers and adoptive parents during the

inspection is all positive. Strengths noted include flexibility, responsiveness and communication. This positive approach to partners ensures that these key relationships are effective and support excellent outcomes for children and families.

## **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:** SC387711

**Registered provider:** Chrysalis Associates Limited

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**Responsible individual:** Dr. Helen Freake

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## **Inspector**

Evelyn Chafota, Social Care Inspector

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