

Psychology Associates

Psychology Associates Limited

Psychology Associates Ltd, 41–43 Lower Fore Street, Saltash, Cornwall PL12 6JQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this adoption support agency

This adoption support agency provides specialised therapeutic interventions for adopted children. The agency employs in-house clinicians as well as a range of self-employed associate therapists who are based nationally.

The agency provides adoption support as part of a wide range of therapeutic consultation and training services. In the last 12 months, the agency has provided over 170 packages of adoption support. Most of this work is provided under contract to local authorities through regional adoption agencies and is outside of the scope of regulatory inspection. The agency also provides a very small number of privately funded assessments and adoption support packages. In the past 12 months, the agency has provided 14 privately funded pieces of adoption support work for children. It is this work that is considered in this inspection.

The manager took up post on 1 December 2025. She has submitted her application to become the registered manager of the service.

Inspection dates: 3 to 4 March 2026

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 **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: 6 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgement

Overall experiences and progress of service users: outstanding

Children are at the centre of the adoption support service. Staff and associates are dedicated to providing high-quality, individualised adoption support. The care that therapists show in their work means that children are sensitively supported to explore their complex histories and experiences in a safe and nurturing way.

A clear, easily accessible enquiry system ensures that parents and professionals have immediate access to essential information about available services from their initial contact. Enquiries are responded to promptly, reducing the potential for drift and delay for children and their families, particularly in times of crisis.

The agency is a highly effective multidisciplinary service. Clinicians include educational and clinical psychologists, counsellors, occupational therapists, and speech and language therapists. The team recognises that a strength of the service is having immediate access to a range of specialists. It enables clinicians to seamlessly seek advice and explore options for joint work without interrupting services to children. Therapists are creative and flexible in their approaches to the support they provide, ensuring that each child receives individual support that responds to their changing needs.

Parents are wholly complimentary about the support that their children receive and the impact that it has on their lives. For some families this has been so significant it has meant that they have been able to sustain living as a family in times of extreme stress. One parent wrote about their clinician:

She has helped to hold us in place when things have been very, very difficult for us. She has listened, guided us, supported us and helped us to get to a place where, despite the most extreme circumstances and behaviour of our son, we are able to continue parenting him and supporting him. It is hard to overstate the positive impact she has had on our lives.

Children are helped to form trusting relationships with clinicians and experience their time at Psychology Associates as a safe space. There is careful thought given to therapy spaces, making them calm and inviting. The inclusion of specialist facilities, such as the sensory gym, mean that clinicians have access to the high-quality resources that they need to work effectively with children.

Children make progress as a result of the adoption support that they receive, relevant to their individual start points. For example, children return to mainstream school, make and sustain friendships or are supported to have difficult conversations with their parents as a result of the sensitive work undertaken with them. One family told the inspector that their son 'appreciated the opportunity' these sessions gave him to 'express himself in confidence', and that the whole process has helped him 'make and keep friend groups and have a better, more positive outlook'.

Clinicians are strongly invested in ensuring that they remain up to date with current practice and development, and this is well supported by managers. Managers invest in links with national providers and other adoption support agencies to remain up to date on new developments and practice, considering where this can be implemented to promote children's best interests.

Previous work by managers to include children in the development of the agency has slowed recently as a result of shifts in the needs of children using the service. The acting manager recognises the importance of children's involvement in the service and has plans to refocus and develop this area of the agency.

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

Safeguarding is at the core of this agency's practice, and all staff are committed to the safety and wellbeing of the children that access the service. Staff at all levels, irrespective of their role, receive regular safeguarding training, including training on areas including the 'Prevent' duty. This ensures that all staff are clear and confident in their safeguarding responsibilities.

Consideration of risk and safety are intrinsic in all clinical sessions. Clinicians regularly reflect on areas of progress, as well as quickly identifying new and emerging themes. Where there are particular areas of concern, informative, practical and considered assessments are implemented, enabling clinicians to understand triggers and to be proactive in mitigating these.

The agency has an on-call safeguarding lead available at all times. This provides an immediate point of contact for any member of staff who has concerns about a child or family. Concerns are documented and monitored, with clear decisions and accountability for actions. The acting manager has established links with relevant statutory services, enabling her to consult on next steps where necessary, and when required, concerns are reported in a timely way.

There are systems in place, through team meetings and reflective practice sessions, to enable clinicians to learn from sharing safeguarding practice. Managers update agency processes and guidance when necessary. Managers share their learning and experience in the sector at a national and international level to support the safeguarding of children.

Managers have strong systems in place for the recruitment of permanent staff as well as for associate clinicians. Detailed checks in line with regulations are well documented with effective management oversight.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers are highly committed to the adoption support element of the agency's work, striving for the best outcomes for children and their families.

Managers take pride in the service that is delivered, and as a result, all staff are enthusiastic, both about their roles and the agency.

Commitment to professional development is strong. Staff constantly access a range of specialist training and development. In addition, the agency has developed a programme of training for external practitioners, including school staff, social workers and parents. This enables clinicians to share specialist knowledge and improve understanding and responsiveness to adopted children. This has been impactful, for example in schools, where staff have taken a more trauma-informed approach to supporting children. This in turn has enabled children to remain in mainstream school with their peers.

Staff receive regular line management supervision along with external clinical or specialist supervision as required. These are invaluable opportunities to reflect both on the work undertaken, and the wellbeing of practitioners. Systems for the induction and annual review of staff performance are in place. Staff feel valued as professionals and well supported in their respective roles. All staff report that managers are accessible and that the strong culture of teamwork in the agency fosters individual commitment to the service.

In recent years, changes in the broader adoption sector have impacted the way that adoption support is funded, delivered and regulated. Managers are working hard to adapt to the changes proactively and positively. Managers are open to staff ideas for developments and are keen to diversify where possible as part of their plans for sustainability in a changing environment. In addition, managers are keen to work with commissioners to understand where funding can be better used to support children. This has led to managers developing a process of initial consultations with local social workers, reducing wastage of funding by identifying the right approach for the individual child from the outset of the work.

Leaders and managers have clear, established systems of governance and oversight. This has enabled them to respond quickly to the changing landscape of adoption support. Use of outcomes monitoring helps managers to understand the impact of the service. Internal reporting systems enable clear day-to-day oversight and mean that leaders and managers are well placed to identify and respond quickly to new patterns or trends. However, managers have not consistently shared their reporting with Ofsted as expected. When this was identified during the inspection, managers put arrangements in place to enable this to happen in the future.

Since the last inspection, the registered manager has left employment and is now an associate for the agency. A new manager has been appointed and has made an application to register with Ofsted. She has been employed by the agency for a number of years and has a sound understanding of the strengths of the agency as well as the areas that she would like to develop further.

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: SC462558

Registered provider: Psychology Associates Limited

Registered provider address: 41–43 Lower Fore Street, Saltash, Cornwall PL12 6JQ

Responsible individual: Susan Candy

Registered manager: Post vacant

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Inspector

Tracey Coglán Greig, Social Care Inspector

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