

After Adoption Yorkshire

Inspection report for adoption support agency

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Inspector	Sean White
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Not judged: this aspect of the provision was not judged

Service Information

Brief description of the service

After Adoption Yorkshire was established in 1994; it is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Its main office is located in a residential suburb on the outskirts of Leeds with a sub-office in Hull; the agency also rents premises in various locations across Yorkshire from which it conducts its outreach functions.

The agency is registered to undertake a range of adoption support functions to both adults and children, whose lives have been touched or affected by adoption. These include; telephone advice line; confidential advice, support, counselling, mediation and befriending services for adopted people; adoptive parents and birth families; birth records counselling; direct work with adopted children; support groups for adopted people; search service to assist those wishing to trace birth and adopted relatives; a mediation advice and support service; mentoring and buddy support schemes; consultation and training for professionals; workshops and seminars

Assistance where disruption of an adoption placement is in danger of occurring or has occurred including mediation services and running disruption meetings
The agency is managed by a Board of Trustees and a registered manager; it is staffed by full and part time workers, sessional workers and volunteers

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This agency provides a wide range of sophisticated support packages to people who have been affected by adoption. This is undertaken through contractual relationships with all the local authorities in the region, and through personal, individual referrals. The service provides support through the skilled and professional efforts of a team of committed workers and volunteers who are managed and supported well. It is an efficiently organised service with everyone involved in carrying on the agency, from the board of trustees down, playing their part in a committed and professional way.

It is a very well informed agency that takes its responsibilities seriously and this is further promoted by a highly skilled, knowledgeable and well-motivated staff team.

The service has a sound underpinning of policies and procedures that promote and inform effective working. It is an enabling and supportive agency that ensures workers are provided with the guidance and training necessary for them to undertake their duties to the best of their abilities.

What the service does well

The most impressive aspects of this service are the range of support services available, and how these are deployed to their best advantage to meet the very diverse and complex needs of people using the service. Tailoring support to the needs driven and expressed by service users is a particular strength that ensures outcome probabilities are owned by the service user. This demonstrates a very strong approach to equality and inclusion; the service user being, essentially, in control of their own direction.

What has been improved since the last inspection

The agency has addressed all the issues raised following the last inspection.

What they could do better

The areas where the agency needs to improve further are those where detail is not always consistent. This is most visible in case files where hand-written and inconsistently recorded information is not always of the highest quality and some details are missing from publications. Although the agency has a generally good approach to training and staff development, some workers have not benefited from recent update training in safeguarding.

What sort of service is it?

Statement of purpose

The provision is good.

The agency has a full and comprehensive statement of purpose that provides a clear and unambiguous outline of its aims and objectives; policies and procedures reflect and inform this. The range of services provided are explicitly stated and provide the reader with an informed understanding of what the agency does and how it works with service users in a welcoming and non-discriminatory way.

There are two basic, age appropriate, children's guides that provide brief information about the service; it does not, however, include details of how to contact the Children's Rights Director.

Safeguarding and promoting welfare

The provision is good.

The agency has a clear, up to date, safeguarding policy and procedure that clearly outlines the issues in respect of abuse and how the service would report and manage allegations or suspicions. The approach to managing cases demonstrates an understanding of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults from abuse and practice clearly shows that service users are safeguarded.

Although all workers have had training in safeguarding, not all staff have had any formal input in recent times.

User focused services

The provision is outstanding.

The agency provides an impressively wide range of services to people with very differing and often complex needs. There is a very clear focus on working with people at their own pace and which addresses their needs in an individual and mutually agreed way. There is a very clear non-judgemental approach, and the welfare and individuality of people is safeguarded throughout their involvement. It is clear that service users develop significant trust in the agency workers and feel enabled to address the challenges of their circumstances in a safe and encouraging way.

Service delivery

The provision is good.

The agency provides services of a high quality. Policies and procedures provide a clear framework for service delivery and the management is fully apprised of the level of provision and manages allocation and workload accordingly.

Workers are skilled and knowledgeable and undertake their responsibilities with enthusiasm and professionalism, and operate within a framework of mutually agreed need. Service users are clear about the services available and which particular provision is suitable for their own circumstances; services are provided on this premise.

Although it is clear that people receive services tailored to their own needs and situations, evidence of explicit assessments, however, is sometimes inconsistent.

Fitness to provide or manage an adoption support agency

The provision is good.

The Board of Trustees and the manager demonstrate full understanding of the organisation and management of an adoption support agency. There is significant knowledge of social care, the legislative framework and current issues that informs and drives a sophisticated and complex organisation. Recruitment procedures are robust, which ensures that any person involved in carrying on the agency are suitable to undertake such responsibilities.

Management of the adoption support agency

The provision is good.

The agency is managed to a very high standard in line with its statement of purpose, policies and procedures. There are clear lines of accountability, responsibility and communication that are understood throughout the service, and everyone is clear about structure and organisation.

There are efficient, well established structures for directing and controlling the service, including rigorous, effective oversight and management of finances. The board of trustees is fully informed of the activities of the agency, including outcomes, are active in their roles and are clear about managing the agency to the best of its abilities, including strategic developments and improvements.

Employment and management of staff and volunteers

The provision is outstanding.

This agency takes very seriously its responsibilities in respect of employing only the most suitable workers and volunteers. Robust and well managed recruitment practices means that the agency is staffed by very skilled people who are able to offer a wide range of professional input.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that services are provided for everyone in the community, regardless of background or circumstances. Both managers and workers demonstrated understanding and clarity about diversity issues and service users were clear that the individual and personal approach of the agency was tailored to their needs.

There is a very well organised approach to the management and monitoring of work, including caseloads and outcomes. There is a strong commitment to staff supervision and support, and all workers have regular contact with their line manager. It is an enabling agency that values and promotes the abilities and skills of its workers; it

provides training opportunities in a range of areas and encourages its staff to promote specialist training to other agencies. Workers have a comprehensive understanding of, and knowledge in, adoption issues, including legislation, and the impact that adoption has on people affected by it, in whatever way or circumstance.

All workers and managers demonstrate a clear understanding of, and commitment to, inter-agency working. They have strong links with a wide range of other services and local authorities, and work closely with them in complex cases where this is paramount for the wellbeing of service users.

The range of work undertaken by this agency is impressive, enabling people affected by adoption to have a tailor made service that is well managed and monitored. There are no time-limited contracts, support being provided for as long as is necessary, or determined by the service user. Workers enjoy a full and supportive management that promotes and encourages them to work towards the outcomes that service users feel meet their needs.

Individual practitioners

The provision was not judged.

Complaints and representations

The provision is good.

The agency has a complaints and representation policy and procedure, a summary of which is contained in the children's guides and which all stakeholders and service users are informed about. The policy is explicit and the procedure includes all relevant and necessary information for complaints to be dealt with effectively and in a timely way. Complaints are accepted graciously and are investigated efficiently, sensitively and in a timely way.

Records

The provision is satisfactory.

There are clear policies and procedures in place that determine the agency's approach to the organisation and administration of records. The managers ensure that there is a clear and unambiguous approach to confidentiality and there are clear protocols in place that protect information when there is a need for it to be shared. All records are kept safely and securely and there are systems in place to ensure that remote working arrangements also maintain security and confidentiality.

Managers have systems in place to monitor the administration of both electronic and paper records and there is a disaster recovery plan in place; this adds a further dimension to the security of information.

All workers and volunteers have a personnel record; these are maintained to a very good standard and include all required information.

All service users have a case record that is maintained by the case-holder. These, however, are inconsistently maintained, particularly in clearly identifying the substance and outcome of initial assessments, and in some cases have hand-written entries that are difficult to read.

Fitness of premises

The provision is satisfactory.

The agency's premises are located in a residential suburb and are accessible to people having business with the service. They provide for a suitably comfortable environment for both staff and service users.

The building is externally secure and internal arrangements ensure that records are protected fully; electronic records and facilities are similarly securely maintained and a disaster recovery plan is in place.

Although the premises and location are suitable for the purposes of the agency, as the service has grown there is an increasing lack of space in the building; this is starting to compromise issues such as storage etc.

Financial requirements

The provision is good.

The agency is well managed financially and presents as viable. The board and managers have robust systems in place to monitor financial matters and there is a transparent approach to presenting annual accounts.

Statutory Requirements

Recommendations

These recommendations relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the registered provider(s) to consider carrying out.

- include details, in the children's guides, of how they can contact the Children's Rights Director (NMS 1.4)
- provide regular training in safeguarding (NMS 2.2)
- consistently express the assessment of need for adoption support services in all case files (NMS 4.6)
- maintain service user records to a consistent standard (NMS 17.1)