

Adoption Services for Adults

PO Box 4621, Marlow SL7 9DG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this adoption support agency

This service is registered to provide adoption support services to adults. The service is based in Buckinghamshire and is operated by an individual. Services provided include: birth records counselling; access to records; searching, tracing and intermediary services; and training and workshops for professionals in all aspects of supporting and working with adults affected by adoption. The agency also holds the adoption contact register previously operated by an adoption support agency that has ceased trading.

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 September 2017

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The adoption support agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 18 December 2014

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This adoption support agency is good because:

- Client's emotional needs relating to their experience of adoption are known, understood and catered for to a high standard.
- The provider and contractors are very skilled and experienced in working with adults affected by adoption even in the most complex of situations.
- Clients are treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity.
- Clients are supported very well to come to terms with any disappointments they experience in their search for a birth family member.
- Clients are confident that they will be able to approach the agency in the future should they need to do so.
- The provider is very experienced, committed and passionate about her work.
- The provider is innovative in her approach to aiding national developments in this specialist area of work.
- Clients receive a highly individualised service.
- The provider takes a flexible approach to her work to make sure that the best outcomes are achieved.

The adoption support agency's areas for development:

- In one case, there was an area of shortfall in the recruitment a contractor.
- The provider has not provided Ofsted with copies of the revised statement of purpose.
- A safeguarding issue relating to a child was not referred in a timely way to the relevant local authority.
- The provider does not have supervision that is appropriate to her role.
- The recording of supervision does not include the duration of the session.
- The provider does not have full oversight of the quality of the work the counsellor undertakes. This work is not subject to review.
- There were no arrangements for deleting information on homeworkers' personal laptops when these are disposed of.

What does the adoption support agency need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meet the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due Date
19 (2010)	<p>The registered person shall not—</p> <p>employ a person to work for the purposes of the agency unless that person is fit to work for the purposes of the agency, or allow a person who is employed by a person other than the registered provider to work for the purposes of the agency unless that person is fit to work for the purposes of the agency.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of an agency unless full and satisfactory information is available in relation to him in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2. (Regulation 19 (1) (a) (b) (2) (d))</p>	11/12/2017
6 (2010)	<p>The registered person shall keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and notify the registration authority of any such revision within 28 days of making the revision. (Regulation 6 (a) (b))</p>	11/12/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that all adoption support agency staff and volunteers understand what they must do if they receive an allegation or have suspicions that a person may have:
 - behaved in a way that has, or may have, harmed a child, or
 - possibly committed a criminal offence against a child.

(Adoption: National minimum standards July 2014 Standard 22.1)

In particular, ensure that any concerns raised about the safety of a child are referred to the relevant local authority without delay.

- Ensure that the registered provider has regular supervision with appropriately qualified and experienced persons. (Adoption: National minimum standards July 2014 Standard 26.1)
- Ensure that a written record is kept by the agency detailing the time and date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff. (Adoption: National minimum standards July 2014 Standard 24.5)
- Ensure that the registered provider monitors the management and outcome of the services in order to be satisfied that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for service users and that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration. In particular, ensure that all contractors' work is subject to supervision and monitoring by the provider and that work is reviewed periodically as to its continued effectiveness. (Adoption: National minimum standards July 2014 Standard 26.4)
- Ensure that the Business Continuity Plan includes both provision of premises and safeguarding/back-up of records. In particular, ensure that the plan includes the arrangements for deleting information on homeworkers' hard drives when these are disposed of. (Adoption: National minimum standards July 2014 Standard 28.3)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of service users: good

The provider understands that people enquiring about receiving a service have often spent a long time plucking up the courage to make the approach. Consequently, she fully appreciates the significant emotional impact that adoption has on people and she ensures that enquirers get a fast and welcoming response. Clients quickly trust the provider and the contractors and develop good professional working relationships with them.

People using the services experience a high-quality professional service. Clients say that the people providing the service are highly skilled, sympathetic, understanding, caring, patient and compassionate. One client said that for her and her birth relatives, using the service had been life-changing.

Clients are treated with dignity and respect. The provider and her contractors are highly sensitive to each client's needs and individual circumstances. For example, a flexible approach is taken to providing a service to clients who are elderly or have health needs to ensure that they can make best use of the work. The good use of internet-based communication systems is especially handy for people living at a distance or living overseas. Interpreting services are used where English is not a person's first language.

Some people's situations are highly complex and the provider and her contractors are astute at identifying potential difficulties, assessing people's emotional states and in ensuring that difficulties, needs and expectations are addressed.

The provider and contractors have particularly impressive skills in balancing the needs of all parties. They recognise when people's needs or expectations are changing. One client spoke about her appreciation of the care and consideration given to her and her birth relatives' needs. She described how she was helped to understand how her birth relatives were feeling. She went on to say that this enabled her to support and reassure them. Another client said that she had found the work carried out with her thought provoking. She went on to say, 'I was helped to consider other aspects of my quest I had not previously considered.'

Clients feel that they are involved in the service provided. Where required, clients are supported to reevaluate their aims and objective as situations evolve. For example, when the relative they were searching for has died or does not want to have contact with them they are helped to understand and deal with disappointments and to come to terms with their situation.

A minority of clients said that they sometimes do not hear for some time about how their case is progressing. Delays to the work are usually caused by other agencies not providing information in a timely way. The provider challenges these agencies

appropriately and she has agreed to set up a system that keeps clients better informed about the progress of their case.

Clients value the fact that they feel that they can approach the service again in the future if they need further support.

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

This agency only works directly with adults affected by adoption. Many have emotional and psychological needs relating to their experience of adoption. Some clients have additional needs. For example, infirmity due to age or debilitating health difficulties. The provider and contractors understand these vulnerabilities and ensure that all parties' well-being is given the highest priority.

Many service users develop deep and trusting relationships with the person working with them and talk to them about their fears and worries.

Contractors are aware of what to do if they had a concern about the provider. However, in one example, information from a client that suggested a child might have experienced or be at risk of abuse was not referred in a timely way to professionals in the local authority.

Gaps in the vetting process for some staff mean that the provider's decision-making about appointments is not always fully informed. For example, one member of staff had not provided her full employment history and the reasons applicants have left a previous job working with children or vulnerable adults are not routinely explored.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is a statement of purpose that sets out the aims and objectives of the service. This document provides the reader with useful information about the services and underpins its work. The provider has not been forwarding the document to Ofsted after she has reviewed it.

The provider has a wealth of experience in and knowledge of working with adults affected by adoption. She has a strong passion and commitment to her work and is highly skilled. A client said, '(Provider's name) has put us at ease and has an excellent manner.' Another client said, '(Provider's name) is a very reassuring and unflappable person who facilitates reunions in the best possible manner for all concerned.'

The provider has strong and collaborative relationships with other agencies and professionals all of whom hold her in high regard. She works hard to develop national awareness about supporting adults affected by adoption. For example, she shows innovation in the training that she develops and delivers nationally. A professional who has attended the training said, 'It was really, really useful;

excellent.' A commissioner said, 'The training is well-thought-out, easy to grasp and the interaction with others in this field is really useful.' Other work of note includes her facilitating workshops and speaking at South East Post Adoption Network conferences.

Over the past months, due to an increase in volume of the work, the provider has commissioned additional contractors to cope with the demand. The agency has grown quickly and this has left some shortfalls in the infrastructure. The provider had begun to address this by taking on a contractor with HR experience and introducing a supervisor's role to help her to supervise the intermediary workers.

The supervision for the provider consists of group meetings with some of the contractors. While these are useful meetings to discuss practice issues, they do not give the provider opportunities to discuss and seek advice about organisational matters, for example advice about any concerns that she may have about a particular contractor. While the counsellor accesses her own clinical supervision there are no arrangements for her to receive supervision from the manager. This means that manager does not have full oversight of all of the work the counsellor carries out. The provider has introduced regular supervision sessions for the intermediary workers in line with a recommendation of the last inspection. The record keeping of supervision sessions does not include the duration of the session.

The provider ensures that clients have the opportunity to give their views about the service that they have received and uses these views to inform future developments. The provider has introduced 'management meetings'. These are used to consider future plans and a development plan has been produced. These meetings are a positive introduction that need time to embed.

There are a sufficient number of contractors to ensure that people do not wait for a service. Team meetings have been introduced and there is a shared aim and passion among the contractors to provide the best possible service.

There are overall suitable arrangements for security of information. However, there were no arrangements to make sure that when a contractor upgrades to a new laptop, the old machine's hard drive is cleared of information. During the inspection, the provider consulted with an IT specialist and sent a link to the contractors to use when they change laptops.

Information about this inspection

During this inspection, inspectors looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, young people and adults. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children, young people and adults. They watched how professional staff work with children, young people, adults and each other and discussed the effectiveness of the help provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people, adults and their families. In addition, inspectors have tried to understand what the adoption support agency knows about how well it is performing and what difference it is making for the children, young people and adults whom it is trying to help.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, using the 'Social care common inspection framework', 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: SC463447

Registered provider: Mrs Jean Milsted

Registered provider address: PO Box 4261, Marlow, SL7 9DG

Responsible individual: N/A

Registered manager: Mrs Jean Milsted

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Inspector

Rosie Dancer: social care inspector



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