

# Time To Listen

Time To Listen Ltd

Marvell House Children's Centre, Cranbourne Street, Hull HU3 1PP

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this adoption support agency

This agency was first registered in January 2018 when, as an existing therapeutic service, it began to provide support and therapy to people affected by adoption. It now provides adoption support in the form of therapy, counselling and life-story work to adopted children, young people and adults and their adoptive families. At the time of the inspection, the agency's team, comprising the manager and seven therapists, was working with 33 families.

**Inspection dates:** 7 to 8 February 2019

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

How well children, young people and adults are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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:** N/A

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** N/A

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This adoption support agency is good because:

- It provides a highly valued service that significantly improves the quality of life of the people who use it.
- It provides its service based on a thorough assessment of need and delivers a highly individualised and user-focused service of therapeutic support.
- The manager and therapists are well qualified and experienced. They are well trained and make very good therapeutic relationships with their service users.
- The agency works well with other local services and commissioners. This helps service users to get the correct help in a prompt manner.
- The agency provides a range of services, in addition to its therapy sessions, where these are needed to improve outcomes for people. For example, it works with schools and other services with which its service users may have contact to support them and train them in how to help the service user concerned.
- Managing and monitoring within the service is well established and effective. The agency provides therapists with good levels of supervision and oversight. This means that their work is undertaken within a framework of support and guidance. This helps to improve the quality of service provided further.

The adoption support agency's areas for development:

- The agency's staff recruitment process has not been sufficiently well implemented and recorded. Some staff appointed as employees, after working as consultant therapists to the agency prior to the agency's registration as an adoption support agency, were not subject to a full recruitment procedure. Although key checks were carried out and the agency's practice is now correct, this means that the suitability of all staff is not sufficiently well assured.
- Although service users' records are well maintained and contain an evaluation of the progress they are making, key decisions and records of therapists' case supervision with their manager are not recorded. This means that records do not always clearly show how and why decisions were taken or that effective oversight of the therapists' work is taking place.
- Although supervision processes are well established within the agency it does not operate a formal appraisal scheme for its staff. This means that the continued suitability, progress, training and qualifications of staff, as well as their own development, are not monitored and reviewed as well as they should be.

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

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005 or any other relevant legislation, and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>Ensure that the agency does not employ a person to work for the purposes of the agency unless that person is fit to work for the purposes of the agency. (Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005, Regulation 19(1)(a))</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of the agency unless full and satisfactory information is available in relation to him in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2. (Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005, Regulation 19(2)(d))</p>	08/03/2019

### Recommendations

- Ensure that entries in records, decisions and reasons are legible and clearly expressed. Specifically, that records of case discussion, supervision and decision-making should be maintained on children's files. (Adoption: national minimum standards, standard 27.4, page 60)
- Ensure that all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and, where they are working with children, this appraisal takes into account the views of the children the service is providing for. (Adoption: national minimum standards, standard 24.6, page 52)

## Inspection judgement

### Overall experiences and progress of service users: good

The therapeutic services provided by this agency are highly effective. They improve the quality of lives of the people who use the service significantly, and outcomes for service users are often outstanding. Some aspects of the agency's safeguarding practice and leadership and management are not as fully developed as they could be, which limits the overall judgement in this area to good.

Assessments of need are insightful and detailed and make clear recommendations regarding the therapeutic approach required. High-quality relationships are developed between service users and their therapists, which help ensure that therapy is a positive and helpful experience. Often people come to access the service after seeking help in other ways and often as a last resort, with many adoptive families being close to breaking down. Support provided is highly individualised and time is spent preparing people and helping them understand what the process will be like for them.

The highly effective therapy delivered by skilled, well-trained and well-supervised therapists leads, over time, to improved relationships and emotional well-being, and an ability to live positive lives for both adopted people and their families. Parents spoken to praised the service highly. One said, 'My life is completely transformed,' and another said, 'This service gives you hope.' In the case of one family who had experienced major difficulties, parents of children who were suffering from significant early trauma, a parent said that they are 'not out of the woods yet but we're a happy family most of the time'.

In the words of one young person who expressed her views of the service in writing for the inspection, 'Gail (registered manager and therapist) is amazing because she is easy to talk to. She has a relaxing and calming room. Gail is the only person that has understood me, and she has never stopped working to help us achieve our goals as a family.' This high level of satisfaction and the agency's success in helping transform its service users' lives and relationships are excellent.

The agency works effectively with children, families and partner agencies, and this helps support the positive outcomes it achieves for its service users. It communicates well with agencies and social workers who commission its services. It responds quickly and liaises well to ensure that the service it provides is relevant. At the same time, it advocates strongly and advises to ensure that the help it provides will be appropriate.

The agency provides clear and regular reports to social workers and referrers on the progress being made. This is helped by the agency's effective monitoring of outcomes and the progress being made in therapy. Where necessary, the agency engages with other services, including schools, to advise, support or provide training

to help them meet the needs of the young people or adults it is working with. In some cases, a great deal of work has been done over a long period to support or address shortfalls in the other services provided to its service users. In doing this, the agency has challenged positively where necessary and not lost focus on the needs of the individual concerned.

The agency understands the needs of children and adults who require therapeutic support arising from their early experiences and adoption. Therapists understand the effects of poor attachment and trauma, and the service is focused on helping the whole family learn how to move on from these experiences. One parent said, 'The work we have done with Time to Listen has transformed our understanding of our daughter's needs, and why she reacts in the ways she does. This has had a profound impact on the way we parent.'

The agency's approach is individualised. It undertakes clear assessments and monitors outcomes and progress effectively, providing clear and regular reports. Outcomes monitoring includes the views of parents and children using the service. The agency is reflective in its practice and works well with other professionals. One professional who works with the agency said, 'They are incredibly skilled, people-focused and child-friendly,' and another said, 'The staff have an expert understanding of young people.'

### **How well children, young people and adults are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

The agency and its therapists are well qualified, trained and experienced to understand the needs of people to whom they provide therapy. Assessments of the support required are detailed and therapy is provided, based on this assessment, in a manner that is well monitored and supervised. Therapy is provided in suitable, comfortable rooms, which are soundproofed to maintain confidentiality. Therapy usually takes place with the parents and child together but, where people are helped individually, another staff member is always nearby to monitor and maintain safety.

The effectiveness of the agency's interventions with families helps to promote a significant improvement in their well-being across their whole lives. The agency helps its users to understand their emotions and behaviours and to manage these in a way which improves their safety. The therapy provided helps people to understand their own past and feelings and to be able to regulate their own emotions and reactions. This improves their well-being and often manifests in a reduction in aggression, self-harm or unsafe behaviour. This significantly improves their safety and that of those around them.

Generally, safeguarding arrangements in the delivery of the agency's work are sound. The agency has appropriate procedures for managing complaints and allegations although, positively, neither of these have been required to date. The agency's manager has developed strong working relationships with commissioning agencies, social workers and other professionals. This, along with an open, reflective

and outcome-focused approach to its practice, allows good external oversight of the agency's work by its stakeholders.

However, some elements of the agency's staff recruitment practice are less robust than they should be. In some situations, in which therapists were engaged on a consultancy basis before the agency was registered, records of the necessary checks on their employment history were not complete. Furthermore, a full and correctly recorded recruitment process had not taken place when these people were subsequently employed by the agency. This means that the agency does not hold the information it is required to in respect of all its staff, and some required checks were not carried out on some staff at their recent appointment as employees.

However, key safeguarding checks, including Disclosure and Barring Service checks, verification of qualifications to practice and therapists' registrations with relevant professional bodies, had been carried out. This provides some safeguards, and in the case of a student who has recently commenced working with the agency all required checks had been carried out.

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

This agency is well led by a manager who understands the needs of the people who use the service, is well qualified and highly experienced to meet these needs. She is ambitious for the service in terms of the quality and effectiveness of its work. The manager is well respected in her field and works very well with other providers in the area, both in a service provision and an advisory role. Training and ongoing learning are priorities in the agency and ensure that it is abreast of new research and methodology in the therapeutic areas in which it works.

The agency is focused on meeting the individual needs of its service users, and because of this it makes a positive difference in their lives. Initial assessments are clearly targeted on the key issues and the outcomes that service users want to achieve. Outcomes and the progress that service users make while partaking in therapy and afterwards are well monitored and include feedback from service users. This helps to ensure that all work done is individually relevant. This clear focus on service quality means that the lives of the children, adults and their families who use the service are significantly improved by its work with them.

The manager is an experienced and respected therapist. This means that she is able to lead the agency with conviction and a thorough understanding of the work done. The record-keeping system developed by the manager ensures that records of the work done by therapists are of good quality and easy to audit, and track progress and the difference that therapy is making.

Good clinical supervision helps to ensure that there are appropriate direction and management of all clinical work done. However, records of case discussions and supervisions between the therapist and the manager, and records of key decisions, are not clearly recorded on case files. This means that records do not always clearly

record how and why decisions were taken and this reduces their effectiveness as a monitoring tool. It also reduces their value to the subject of the record should they want to access their records and review what had happened to them during their time in therapy.

Evaluations of the effectiveness of therapy are undertaken regularly, and three-monthly reports on progress are provided to commissioners. Good communication between the manager, local commissioners and other professionals ensures that the agency is meeting local needs and allows external oversight of the work done.

The agency provides its therapists with good levels of training. It is proactive in doing so, which ensures that it has people qualified in the range of therapies the agency provides before they are needed. This allows it to respond promptly to any referral for its service. The manager is rigorous in ensuring that therapists are suitably qualified and that they maintain their registration with the appropriate professional registering body. As well as essential training in safeguarding and first aid, the agency's staff undertake a range of training in their specialist areas, including neuroscience, dissociation, attachment, resilience and trauma, as well as in the specific and specialist therapeutic approaches the agency employs.

The agency's arrangements for the professional, clinical and managerial supervision of its therapists are good. Structured opportunities are built into the agency's work to allow for individual and group supervision as well as time for reflection and case consideration. However, the agency does not have a formal system for undertaking annual appraisals of its staff members. This means that the continued suitability, progress, training and qualifications of staff, as well as their own development, are not monitored, reviewed or supported as well as they should be.

## **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:** 1250134

**Registered provider:** Time To Listen Ltd

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### **Inspector**

Stephen Smith, social care inspector



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