

Joanna North Associates

2 Stable Farm, Collipriest, Tiverton, Devon EX16 4PT
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this adoption support agency

Joanna North Associates Ltd registered as an adoption support agency in 2006. The provider and sole practitioner is a chartered psychologist and psychotherapist.

The provider offers the following adoption support services:

- counselling and psychotherapy for adopted children and their families
- counselling and psychotherapy for adults who have been affected by adoption
- intermediary services for those wishing to contact birth relatives.

The provider is currently developing links with another organisation which specialises in tracing missing relatives.

The agency provides other specialist services, such as expert witness work for the courts and staff training, which fall outside the remit of this inspection.

The provider has received the British Psychological Society's Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychology in Practice.

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 April 2018

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 outstanding

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: 9 February 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This adoption support agency is outstanding because:

- The quality and effectiveness of the service has remained consistently high throughout the last eight years. The service has been rated outstanding over four consecutive inspections.
- The highly skilled provider shows remarkable fortitude and commitment to helping children and families. Through exceptionally enduring professional relationships, she helps families under extreme stress to stay together.
- The provider advocates strongly for children and their families. For example, she challenges other agencies to ensure that children receive the adoption support fund monies to enable them to receive the therapy that they need.
- The provider makes exceptionally good use of clinical supervision from highly qualified professionals. This helps to enhance her practice skills to better support children and families.
- The provider makes her published work available to parents to increase their understanding of their children's behaviour. Her articles and books disseminate her work beyond this service.

Inspection judgement

Overall experiences and progress of children, young people and adult service users: outstanding

The provider is a long-established sole practitioner who excels at providing highly individual, tailored support for children and their families. Most of her clients have received therapeutic support from her for many years. The outcomes for children and their parents have been consistently positive.

Parents say that their family relationships have improved enormously since their therapy began. Children show marked improvements in their behaviour and stability. In many cases, the provider's exceptionally skilled work has helped to avoid family breakdown. This has a major positive impact on children's life chances.

The provider has an excellent understanding of each child's needs. She makes great efforts to find toys and other objects to help children to express themselves. This helps children to feel confident and comfortable with familiar items and, consequently, to look forward to and participate in their therapy sessions.

The provider is extremely good at identifying children's additional needs. One young person showed signs of a previously undiagnosed complex communication disorder. The provider initiated a referral to the local child and adolescent mental health service for a psychiatric assessment. This resulted in a diagnosis, which will now enable him to access services that he needs as he becomes a young adult.

The provider has helped this family to recognise and understand the young person's needs, the challenges that this condition has on the young person and how to help him. As a result of the provider's intervention, the young person and his family can see that there has been some progress, particularly with helping the young person to communicate with others in a more positive way.

Parents are really pleased that the provider has helped them by linking with their children's schools. Her work with education providers has supported some children who are struggling to remain at their school, when this might otherwise have proved impossible.

Parents spoke about the provider advocating strongly on their children's behalf to obtain funding from the Adoption Support Fund. When the application for funds has not been processed in a timely manner, the provider has been assertive with local authorities to expedite this. Had she not done this, families would have been left with no support and at increased risk of crisis.

The provider consults with children and parents after every session. She acts on their comments and tailors her work flexibly, to meet changing needs.

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

The provider maintains a high level of safeguarding training. She recognises that, as a sole practitioner, there is a theoretical risk that she could become isolated in her practice. She uses training and clinical supervision to challenge herself, so that she remains fully aware of new developments in legislation and practice.

The provider has a very detailed understanding of when and how to escalate matters of concern. She has done so when required. Since the last inspection, there have been no safeguarding matters that required further action. There have also been no complaints about the service.

The provider has an excellent understanding of how children's previous experiences of trauma and abuse affect their behaviour. She has exceptional empathy with children and families who are under extreme pressure and at risk of family breakdown. Her deep understanding of the impact of this, supported by clear safeguarding policies and procedures, helps her to keep children and adults safe.

Children's practical safety is very well protected. Children have a safe and comfortable space to play. Stairs in the provider's home are suitably protected to prevent accidents.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The provider maintains exceptionally high standards of reflective practice. She achieves this by consulting regularly with a number of different professionals who provide focused clinical supervision. These colleagues are chosen carefully to help the provider to develop specific areas of her work. Following these sessions, the provider re-evaluates her work to make continual improvements.

The provider attends a wide range of training courses to further her professional development. This enhances her practice. She uses this learning practically to provide children and adults with additional coping strategies.

The provider has an excellent national reputation in the field of adoption support. In 2017, these achievements were officially recognised by an award from the British Psychological Society. As a result, she is sometimes asked to help other organisations which work in related fields to improve their practice.

The provider has approached this new area of work positively, but is aware of her obligations as a registered adoption support agency. Consequently, any new business relationships are underpinned by detailed written agreements. The provider has given exceptionally detailed guidance to one tracing organisation, to help them to understand their legal obligations.

The provider also insists on background checks before forming associations with other individuals and organisations. This helps to ensure that only suitable people have contact with children and potentially vulnerable adults.

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: SC067674

Registered provider:

Registered provider address:

Responsible individual:

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Inspector

Heather Chaplin, social care inspector



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