

PAC-UK

PAC-UK Ltd

5 Torriano Mews, Torriano Avenue, London NW5 2RZ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this adoption support agency

PAC-UK Ltd is a charitable company limited by guarantee. In the past two years, it has merged with After Adoption Yorkshire and developed a partnership with Adoption UK. The agency offices are in London and Leeds, and there are outreach bases in a number of local authorities. The agency is registered to provide adoption support services to both adults and children, including birth records counselling and intermediary services. The range of services offered includes two telephone help and advice lines, counselling, therapeutic work, training, education and parent consultant peer services.

The agency employs 63 staff, of which 49 are part time. In addition, there are 74 sessional staff and 14 volunteers. During the year January to December 2017, the agency provided 5,263 appointments for 1,153 service users, 2,873 of which were funded by local authorities, representing 984 service users. Additionally, it provided a telephone advice service to 4,445 service users and 358 training events to professionals and adopted adults/adoptive parents.

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 December 2017

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: 15 January 2015

Overall judgement at last inspection: N/A

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None.

Key findings from this inspection

This adoption support agency is outstanding because:

- Leaders and managers are inspirational, committed and forward thinking. Robust monitoring and a reflective approach to changes and practices in how adoption services are delivered have ensured improved performance.
- Trustees and senior managers have managed recent, fast-paced change well, with a merger and a partnership in quick succession. The impact on staff has been minimal, and the change has created a wider offer of post-adoption support services.
- Two practice and improvement awards have been granted as a result of innovative work and research, one for an evaluative study on child to parent violence, and one on raising schools' awareness of adoption.
- High-quality partnerships and networks have been established across Yorkshire and London that enable the development and delivery of adoption support services.
- The services provided enable children and young people to make exceptional progress. Their health, educational and emotional needs are met. Services often prevent family breakdown, supporting stable and secure families.
- The work with adult service users is exceptional. This not only includes adopted adults and their birth families, but also non-consenting birth parents.
- Staff are skilled, passionate and committed to improving the lives of children, adult service users and families. They receive high-quality clinical supervision and training that equip them to do their job well.
- The therapeutic offer to both adopted adults and children covers a range of approaches, which illustrates the experience and skills of the workforce.
- The agency runs the AT-ID group (adopted teens identity group), which is a fantastic initiative and represents young people's voices at the highest level.
- Safeguarding is at the centre of practice. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and they adopt a multi-agency approach to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are helped and protected.

The adoption support agency's areas for development:

- To ensure that the agency's safeguarding policy includes all thematic safeguarding areas, including honour-based violence and risk of forced marriage.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure the agency's procedure is in line with Government guidance and requirements, regarding adding information in respect of honour based violence and forced marriage to the agency's safeguarding policy. (Adoption: national minimum standards, page 64, paragraph 22.2)

Inspection judgement

Overall experiences and progress of service users: outstanding

This adoption support agency provides excellent, high-quality packages of individual support to children, families and adult service users. The support offered has a profound and positive impact on service users' lives. In some cases, this support prevents family or education breakdown for children. For example, a special guardian said, 'It is helping us to understand the children, and them to understand that people love and want to help them.' It also helps adult service users to understand the impact of adoption on their lives. One adopted adult said, 'I feel like I've found some identity, something has changed, there is no longer a big question hanging over me.'

Over the past year, the agency has undergone fast-paced change. Two major changes in quick succession have brought challenges, but also widened the offer and choices of support to more service users in the London and Yorkshire areas.

The agency is leading work on child to parent violence (CPV), which has been a growing area of concern across adoption placements nationally. This innovative work is leading the way in addressing this problem. It is supported by a performance improvement fund grant (PIF) from the Department for Education. The offer of support in CPV is tailored to the needs of children and families, and is offered through either therapeutic interventions, training courses and/or peer-to-peer work from a parent consultant. Early indications show a reduction in violence and a better understanding of the impact of early trauma on children. The adoptive parents involved in this work acknowledged the positive impact that it is having on supporting them and their children. They said that the work helps them to reflect on their children's early experiences, and gives them strategies and ideas without being directive or judgemental.

The agency is also leading excellent work on the educational needs of children who are adopted. This work is also supported by a PIF and a Rayne Foundation grant. The work is offered on several levels: therapeutic work for individual children, development work/parent support groups and training programmes to raise awareness. The training for schools enables them to be 'attachment- and trauma-friendly schools' and, as a result, the agency awards them 'beacon' status. In addition, the agency runs an advice line for adoption-related education issues, which is a fantastic resource for parents and professionals and is well used. This work is helping children to improve their behaviour in school, reduce violence and aggression and promote self-regulation.

Young people benefit from another innovative project, the AT-ID group (adopted teens identity group). This project offers three main strands of work to 11 to 18 year olds. The strands include website and chat forums, activity-based days and the youth council. The youth council is the main function of the group and is both a voice and influence group and a therapeutic group. It is influenced by what young people wish

to talk about. Outcomes of discussions regarding the impact that adoption has on children in an education setting have informed the online resources provided to schools nationally by the Department for Education. The enthusiasm and skill of the workers, coupled with the benefits of the project work that the young people are involved in, are examples of outstanding practice. Young people spoken to during the inspection described feeling listened to, being taken seriously and experiencing an increase in their levels of confidence through attending the group. One young person said, 'It's been life changing, like a family, it's given me a new lease of life.'

The agency's offer of work with adults is impressive. Sensitive and well-planned work helps adopted adults and/or their families to access birth records and to consider intermediary work to trace relatives. Staff understand the importance of this work and help to manage expectations and prepare service users for all eventualities. The staff's commitment, knowledge, motivation and support are excellent. The agency also offers work to non-consenting birth parents to manage letterbox contact, life-story work, later-life letters and facilitating meetings with adoptive parents. Skilful and sensitive work in this area supports birth parents to manage and understand their children's adoptions and to increase the chances of positive contact in the future. Other areas of work with adults include connected carers, special guardians, training packages and an advice line.

The therapeutic offer to adopted adults, children and families and others connected with adoption covers a range of approaches and demonstrates the experience and skills of the workforce. For example, integrative counselling, psychotherapy, dyadic developmental psychotherapy, child on parent violence, non-violent resistance and specific intensive training on eliminating difficult behaviours are just a few of the courses on offer. The adopted parents whose children were receiving therapy report dramatic improvements in their understanding of their children's needs. This is helping them to manage and support their children and improve family stability.

The agency has recognised and responded to the changes in how adoption services are delivered. With uncertainty about how regional adoption agencies will form, local authorities have been less certain about renewing service level agreements. The agency has responded with a new initiative: training parent consultants. This enables accessible, bite-size and creative packages of support for adopters. Parent consultants have five days' training in neuro-physiological psychotherapy, a framework for working with traumatised children. Parent consultants then offer peer-to-peer support, which consists of an assessment followed by six telephone calls of 45 minutes each. Adopted parents said of this service, 'Hugely helpful, she knows what she is talking about, I feel I'm talking to someone who understands my perspective.'

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

The agency offers a safe service for all those involved with or using its services. Prior to receiving a service, all service users receive a written information pack that

includes a description of the agency's approach to safeguarding practices, how to complain if needed and a consent form explaining confidentiality. Children receive a copy of the guide to adoption support, which gives them information on what to expect and how to contact an advocate or make a complaint.

Risks are identified through assessments at the beginning of the work with the agency, and are continually thought about during the process. All staff have a clear understanding of both child and parent safety through child on parent violence work. Clear expectations and agreements set boundaries around this work from the start.

Staff have access to excellent safeguarding information and training. This is central to practice in the agency. All staff interviewed understood their responsibilities and how to report concerns, both current and historic. A senior member of staff is the named lead for safeguarding and monitors complaints, concerns or allegations to ensure that the correct procedures are followed. The safeguarding lead uses a 'safeguarding tracker', which is an effective tool to ensure that actions are followed up, and a clear record of any concerns is documented and monitored closely throughout the process.

The registered manager has developed good partnerships with other agencies and safeguarding partners. This includes sitting on the social work advisory group on permanence, which brings wider practice development to the agency, such as learning from serious case reviews. The safeguarding policy is shared with the Local Safeguarding Children Board for approval. The policy is good and covers most thematic areas of safeguarding, such as the risk of radicalisation, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. A minor shortfall is that it does not yet cover honour-based violence and the risk of forced marriage. This shortfall has not had any impact on the safety of children or adults.

The agency uses rigorous recruitment procedures to help to ensure that all staff are safely recruited and competent to work with vulnerable adults, children and young people. This includes mandatory registration with their relevant professional bodies. The agency is a 'learning organisation'. Staff describe excellent training opportunities which keep them up to date with understanding the impact of early abuse, neglect and trauma. They also feel that they constantly learn from families, peers and other professionals through their work with the agency. All staff are expected to undertake safeguarding training during their probation period and to attend yearly updates. This training extends to the trustees of the agency, who are aware of and take their responsibilities for safeguarding seriously.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers are committed, passionate and forward thinking, and have enabled the agency to provide excellent adoption support services during a challenging time for adoption work. They continually evaluate and reflect on what service users need and find innovative and creative ways to provide this, despite constant challenges as the provision of adoption services develops. Their continued

membership of national bodies, such as the adoption leadership board, newly forming regional adoption agencies and the consortium of adoption support agencies, has ensured continued excellent partnerships and development of practice. Their recent partnership with one of their biggest competitors is a great testament to their commitment to providing the best possible practice for service users. Leaders and managers worked hard to manage this change and uncertainty, and have kept staff feeling appreciated and valued.

Staff are similarly committed and passionate about the work that they do and feel supported in their work. They describe excellent formal supervision, as well as group and clinical supervision, and feel that leaders and managers are available and accessible. The staff team is from a variety of disciplines, including social work, counselling, therapy and peer consultancy. All staff show exceptional commitment to their role and work well together as a team. One staff member said, 'What is wonderful here is it is a place where everyone is working in the same direction.' Excellent administrative processes support efficient services which are well planned with service users. The range of training on offer to staff is of a very high quality and includes access to two days a year of external training, in addition to internal training which covers recent developments, evaluation and research. Electronic case records show that good, clear records are kept of interventions.

The agency has continued to grow, develop and improve practice since the last inspection in 2015. The merger in 2015 and then the more recent partnership in late 2016 have increased the size of the agency considerably. Leaders and managers have adapted the services to ensure that they can give the best possible offer of support to those affected by adoption. The agency has been successful in securing two further PIF grants from the government to expand its work. It has adapted its approach to adoption support, making it more accessible and creative, offering smaller packages more quickly. The use of early interventions through the peer-to-peer support services is offered, as well as continuing therapeutic services.

The agency has comprehensive quality assurance processes to support improvement. All service users are asked for feedback, and this is reflected on and used to improve provision. The agency also ensures that feedback is passed upwards to the adoption leadership board and others who plan service development. The agency is working closely with the Hadley Centre for adoption and foster care, (University of Bristol) in its development of the CPV, under the PIF grant, and the education project continues with PIF funding, both projects delivering excellent and innovative practice. The work of parent consultants on the CPV has been externally evaluated recently, yet, although it showed some positive outcomes, it was too small a sample to be reliable.

Trustees are fulfilling their function to oversee the work of the agency and ensure that it meets standards and regulations and is financially viable. The chair of the trustees is very experienced in the adoption field and has a good understanding of the process, navigating with a clear action plan and forward thinking to benefit the agency and, ultimately, the service users. There is a good interface between the trustees and senior managers, which is seeing them work closely together to improve

services. The trustees are currently seeking to recruit further members to the board and wish to increase the diversity of the membership to reflect the community that they work with.

The agency has excellent working relationships with local authorities, commissioners and the newly forming regional adoption agencies. Professional practice exceeds good, and the agency continues to deliver excellent outcomes for service users.

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 difference 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: SC066981

Registered provider: PAC-UK Ltd

Registered provider address: 5 Torriano Mews, Torriano Avenue, London
NW5 2RZ

Responsible individual: Peter Sandiford

Registered manager: Janet Slater

Telephone number: 0207 284 0555

Email address: jan@pac-uk.org

Inspector

Christine Kennet, social care inspector



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017