

# The Apple Tree Centre

The Apple Tree Centre (South Yorkshire) Ltd

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this adoption support agency

The Apple Tree Centre is a therapeutic service for adoptive parents and their children. It offers a range of therapy services which includes play therapy, filial therapy, art psychotherapy, dance movement psychotherapy, integrative psychotherapy, person centred counselling, therapeutic parenting support and systemic family therapy.

The adoption support agency was registered with Ofsted in April 2020. The manager was also registered with Ofsted at the same time. The agency currently employs 3 counsellors and 8 therapists. There is one full-time centre manager who oversees the day-to-day running of the service.

In the last 12 months, the agency provided 26 adoption support packages to children, young people and their families. The Apple Tree Centre also offers other therapeutic work that is not adoption support. This inspection considered the regulated services that the agency provides.

### Inspection dates: 23 to 25 February 2026

**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:** 25 July 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none



## Inspection judgement

### **Overall experiences and progress of service users: outstanding**

The quality of adoption support services provided by this agency is exceptional. Children and families benefit from having access to bespoke support packages from highly skilled therapists. The therapeutic support is relevant to the children's and families' needs, is purposeful and ethical. This is due to the agency's process for consulting with children and families, combined with a robust assessment and review process. Consequently, the impact of the therapy for children is remarkable. One parent stated that the therapeutic support that their child is receiving has 'made a massive difference.'

Equally, the direct work that the agency undertakes with parents helps to support families to stay together. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the agency and how the direct work they have received has helped them to understand their child's behaviours and emotional needs. For example, one parent said that the support they have received from the agency has helped them to 'reconnect and parent my children in a therapeutic way.'

The agency treats children and families with dignity and respect. Leaders and managers are honest about what support can be offered and they are clear about the limits of confidentiality. Children receive therapeutic support that is respectful of their life journey and helps them to develop a more positive self-view, a strong sense of identity and to build emotional resilience.

The quality of relationships between the managers and staff working in the agency, the children receiving a service, and other key individuals is exceptionally strong. Parents feel valued and each child quickly develops trusting relationships with their therapist.

The agency has well established mechanisms for ensuring that children and families can share their views about the services they receive. This includes being able to make a formal complaint if they wish. In addition, the agency's response to feedback and complaints is timely and thorough. Leaders and managers take on board any feedback to make improvements to the service, such as making fidget toys available in the waiting room, or providing more comfortable chairs.

Children and their families have access to a safe and welcoming environment. Staff have the resources they need to undertake their work, and each therapy room is well resourced and child friendly.

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

Children's safety is paramount within this agency, and this helps children and families to feel safe. Safeguarding practice is exceptionally strong. The safeguarding

and confidentiality policies are easy to understand; staff know them and follow these procedures very effectively.

The agency's systems to support the monitoring and oversight of safeguarding concerns are embedded and as a result, leaders and manager's oversight of safeguarding incidents is strong. This, coupled with effective working relationships with external professionals, results in the timely sharing of information between relevant parties when there are concerns about a child's safety.

The therapeutic support provided to children and parents contributes to increasing children's safety in many ways. For example, the support that therapists provide to children and their parents has resulted in a significant reduction in children going into crisis or children going missing from home. This not only helps children to become increasingly safe but also supports children to make progress across all areas of their lives.

The agency's process for recruiting new staff is robust and safer recruitment processes are rigorously adhered to. In addition to this, managers are diligent in ensuring that only high calibre staff are recruited to work in the agency. When the performance of staff falls below expected standards, leaders and managers act quickly to address this. This ensures that only the best support is available from suitability qualified and motivated therapists.

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

The registered manager and responsible individual work closely together and provide a cohesive leadership team for the agency. They are both well supported by an experienced centre manager who ensures the smooth running of the service.

The leadership and management of this agency is exceptionally strong, and managers have excellent oversight of the service, the quality of therapeutic support offered and the impact that this has for children. Leaders and managers have very high aspirations for what can be achieved for children. They continually drive forward change within the agency to ensure that children and families receive the highest quality of adoption support.

Due to the excellent oversight leaders and managers have of the service, they have identified and responded to areas that needed to be further developed and strengthened. For example, the staff team now consists of a core team of permanently employed therapists and a small pool of self-employed Associate therapists. This helps to promote stability, with the team working effectively together to adhere to the same standards.

In addition, leaders and managers have developed report writing guidance for staff, which is underpinned by research. This guidance has been developed to achieve consistency in the quality of reports so that all reports contain information which is relevant and helpful to children, families and professionals.

The registered manager and responsible individual have an excellent understanding of post adoption support and current challenges that children and families face. They have responded to these challenges in a positive and creative way, through sharing resources and learning with parents and professionals. In addition, the agency also provides support to a local education provider.

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have increased their ability to exert influence in the field of adoption support services. They work proactively and positively with partner organisations. This builds strong relationships with social workers from commissioning authorities to secure positive outcomes for children. In addition, they have worked hard to cultivate links with local training providers to support and develop trainee therapists.

Staff morale is excellent and staff are proud to be a part of the agency. Staff value the encouragement they receive from leaders and managers so that they can share their ideas and contribute to the development of the agency. Staff feel valued and supported. One member of staff said, 'I have been greatly impressed by leaders' and managers' commitment to ensuring that all therapists have reflective time in between appointments. Their priority is to ensure that therapy sessions are offered by calm, grounded, mindful therapists and that recording afterwards is written from a reflective position.'

No requirements or recommendations were made following this inspection.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, young people and adults, using the social care common inspection framework.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 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:** 2570461

**Registered provider:** The Apple Tree Centre (South Yorkshire) Ltd

**Responsible individual:** Rose Dymond

**Registered manager:** Jennifer Reid

**Telephone number:** 01142665546

**Email address:** [info@appletreecentre.co.uk](mailto:info@appletreecentre.co.uk)

### **Inspector**

Shirin Khan, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
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