

Orchard House Family Assessment Centre

Inspection report for Residential Family Centre

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Inspector	Jennifer Reed
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Setting address	Orchard House, Fons George, TAUNTON, Somerset, TA1 3JS
Telephone number	0845 021 2700
Email	info@orchardhousefac.co.uk
Registered person	Orchard House Family Assessment Centre Limited
Registered manager	Rosalind Patricia Weller
Responsible individual	Freda Veronica Gardner
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Orchard House is a residential family centre for up to six families, who are referred for assessment to the centre by the Courts or Local Authority Children's Services. The centre enables children to live safely with their family while care from their parent(s) or carers is assessed with a view to the development of parenting skills and a better understanding of the child's needs. The centre provides evidence based assessments which will enable informed decisions to be made about whether or not it would be in the child's best interests to remain in the permanent care of their parent(s) or carers.

The centre's multi-disciplinary team liaise and work with local agencies and services to provide support to meet the identified needs of families. Staff work to empower families who require support in order to enable their child/children to remain in their care.

The residential family centre's location provides residents with easy access to the town's facilities.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

The centre was notified of the inspection shortly before it commenced, to ensure that families were informed and assessment processes were not disrupted. The two day inspection focused on all of the key national minimum standards and checked the progress of the centre in meeting the actions and recommendations made at the previous inspection undertaken in July 2007. Staff and resident families participated in the inspection process.

The centre is well managed and efficiently organised to meet the individual needs of each family and its outstanding level of practice is underpinned by the management's strong commitment to continuous improvement. The centre provides families with excellent support and assessment services and the safety and well-being of children is a paramount consideration at all times. Parents and carers are treated with respect and empowered to care for their child(ren) during their assessment. The staff team are well supported by a clear service structure and access to comprehensive guidance and training which helps them to carry out their roles effectively. Well written policies, procedures and records contribute to promoting the welfare of families and safeguarding children; they support the centre's sound working practices. Two minor omissions in documentation were identified during the inspection. However, neither had impacted adversely on safe practice nor detrimentally affected outcomes for families.

Improvements since the last inspection

Two actions and six recommendations were made at the previous inspection and all have been satisfactorily met by the centre.

The responsible individual and the Registered Manager have both been registered with Ofsted and a management system has been set up to review and record the quality of care provided at the residential family centre. All entries made in records are now signed by members of staff and medication records are completed in full. The centre's Statement of Purpose has been amended to include information about the use of CCTV.

The centre has identified independent persons or agencies to be contacted in the event of a complaint being made against the Registered Manager or the responsible individual. Recruitment and selection processes have been updated to ensure that all necessary checks are made on individuals to ensure they are suitable to work at the centre. The centre has supported staff in completing their National Vocational Qualification award at level 3 and at least one member of staff has undertaken a four day first aid appointed person certificated training course.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Families benefit from the excellent level of health promotion and health care provided at the centre. Staff empower parents by enabling them to take responsibility for maintaining their own and their children's good health. Staff help parents to recognise health issues by sensitively providing sound advice and guidance which supports parents in making informed choices about how to effectively meet their family's health needs. The staff team demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of both physical and emotional health matters. Staff complete first aid training, including paediatric and certificated courses in first aid, and food hygiene and safe food handling training. Furthermore, individual staff members are qualified in specialist areas, for example health visiting, social work and clinical psychology.

The centre makes arrangements for families to be registered with local medical practitioners and families are supported to access specialist medical services as required. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that children's health needs are promoted and met. For example, staff rigorously implement the centre's placement plans which clearly outline children's identified health needs and record their development. Staff encourage parents to work closely with their community health visitors, ensuring that children receive regular developmental checks, vaccinations and immunisations. One parent said, 'we have constant visits from our health visitors'.

Medication is securely stored and the supervised administration of medication procedures within the centre keep adults and children safe. Medicines are dispensed by staff to parents for them to either self-administer or give to their children under

staff supervision. The centre obtains prior written permission from parents for each child, should a staff member need to give first aid or medication to their child at any time. One parent noted that 'first aid boxes are all over the home'. This provision enables parents to quickly respond to their family's minor injuries.

Medication records have been reviewed since the previous inspection and they provide a clear account of all medication, treatment and first aid given to families. Accidents are well recorded and detailed evidence of any such occurrence is included in this record, contributing to children's safety. Staff encourage parents and children to take regular exercise, get sufficient rest and eat a healthy diet to promote their good health. The centre's assessment programme includes regular cookery demonstrations which show parents how to prepare a range of healthy and nutritious meals for themselves and their children. Parents report that this input is very helpful in developing their culinary skills. Fruit is always available within the centre and parents are asked to introduce fruit into their children's menus. The centre provides a clean and healthy environment for families to live within and infection control measures are robust.

The centre's assessment programme includes opportunities for parents and children to attend community activities, for example, the local children's centre and baby and toddler groups. A range of leisure activities are available within close proximity to the centre and staff accompany parents to support and sustain their interests and build their confidence and skills. Staff liaise with the local authority to find suitable educational provision for school-age children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Policy guidance provides staff and families with clear information about expectations of behaviour. The residents' guide also provides information to families about acceptable conduct within and outside the centre. The centre takes into account the individual risk assessments carried out during the referral process and the assessed individual abilities and needs of parents and children when managing difficult situations. Staff are competent in the effective de-escalation and management of any challenging behaviour. Parents and children enjoy positive relationships with staff. One parent said, 'Staff are helpful and encourage you to do well. It is a very warm and relaxing assessment place and the centre is exceptional in meeting residents' needs'.

The centre's complaint system works well. All residents' complaints are taken seriously and promptly responded to by the Registered Manager, whatever the nature of the issue. Adults know how to make a complaint and they receive a written response to their concerns. The centre has identified independent persons or agencies to be contacted in the event of a complaint being made against the Registered Manager or the responsible individual.

The context of an assessment environment using CCTV to ensure that children are

kept safe, necessarily impacts on privacy for families. However, parents understand the reason for surveillance and appreciate the centre's sensitivity in providing agreed private couple time. Families can use the centre's cordless telephone to make calls to professionals and significant persons or use their own mobile phones to make personal calls.

Staff attend a range of regular child protection training events and the staff team demonstrates an excellent understanding of safeguarding matters and child and adult protection issues. There are clearly defined processes and systems within the centre to identify and report any safeguarding concern to the appropriate authorities. The safety and well-being of children is the centre's priority consideration in all aspects of its assessment and support work. The high quality CCTV system provides constant oversight of life within the centre and is an effective mechanism in keeping children safe. The centre rigorously operates a visitors' book and only staff are permitted to open the door to visitors, to ensure that families are protected.

Recruitment and selection processes have been updated to ensure that all necessary checks are made on individuals to ensure they are suitable to work at the centre. Health and safety matters are robustly addressed and environmental risk assessments are completed to a high standard. Positive steps are taken to keep families safe from hazards and regular utilities and premises checks are made to reduce the likelihood of any risk. Every week, the home tests the fire alarm system and carries out a fire drill, requiring staff and families to evacuate the building; this included one test carried out at night. Families are clear that they know how to safely leave the building in an emergency situation. However, the centre only records a fire alarm test and there is no record of a fire drill having been undertaken. The centre has an emergency plan which covers some foreseeable crises. However, this plan does not address all points raised within the national minimum standards and requires expansion. Although there is a shortfall in current plans, the inspection identified how the centre has effectively dealt with a number of crises and there is sufficient evidence to show that families have not been adversely affected by the limited written plans.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

There are no key standards within this outcome.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Admissions to the centre are given a considerable amount of thought. Detailed viability and risk assessments are undertaken to ensure that admissions are only made that are considered to be in the child(ren)'s best interests. Staff demonstrate care and are very sensitive in their responses when dealing with families coming into or leaving the centre. Due regard is given to the mix of the families resident at any

one time and the impact this may have on assessment process. Staff support families well, and demonstrate commendable practice in ensuring that parents who may be required to leave the centre without their children are helped to move on and hold onto the positive aspects of their assessment. The centre has recently established a trust fund to help families move back to their community should they return home with their children. This is innovative and exemplary practice.

The centre formulates and implements detailed written plans which show how the centre will undertake the assessment. Parents say they know about their plans and they are clear about what the assessment process entails. Written weekly feedback forms on progress are completed and given to parents. Staff then discuss this report with parents, helping them to understand how the week's assessment period has gone and evaluating how they are meeting agreed objectives. Assessments and reporting are consistent with the Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families. Staff are trained to effectively complete assessments, including employing specific assessment tools, for example, the Parenting Assessment Manual.

Progress is reviewed every four weeks and parents' views are taken into account in review meetings. Staff consider any special needs or factors impacting on the assessment, for example, individual learning difficulties and disabilities, and the centre strives to find the best way to support each family member. Families can express their views about the assessment and the operation of the home in a number of ways. For example, in key worker meetings, house meetings, private interviews with staff, using the centre's complaints system and the completion of a questionnaire at the end of their placement.

Empowering parents is fundamental within the assessment placement. The centre aims to reduce any restrictions on independence and promotes opportunities for parents to make everyday choices for themselves and their children. Staff work flexibly to provide support to families who wish to spend time outside of the centre in supervised community activities.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The centre's location provides families with easy access to the town's facilities which are in close proximity. The premises provide sufficient space and resources to meet the needs of up to six resident families and it is secure from public intrusion. The house is well decorated, internally and externally, and it is appropriately furnished, providing families with a pleasant, domestic environment which is maintained to a good standard. The garden area is well tended and secured by solid gates to provide a safe play area. The centre provides a range of outside play items for children to enjoy.

A refurbishment programme is ongoing, with the aim of making further improvements to the appearance of the premises. Four bedrooms have en-suite facilities and there are two separate bathrooms, used primarily by families staying in

the other two bedrooms. Staff regularly check and record the discharge temperature of water at each outlet to make sure that the temperature is maintained at a safe level for families to use. Each bedroom provides sufficient furniture and a TV/DVD; parents report that their beds are comfortable. Some families say they would like more storage provided in their rooms, although others say there is sufficient storage. Families are able to bring some personal possessions and toys with them and each family is given a safe-box in which they can securely store their valuables. Each family's is able to lock their bedroom door which provides security and privacy.

The communal areas of the centre are kept clean and provide families with a choice of rooms to relax in. There is the 'snug', the playroom and the sitting room which all have comfortable leather sofas and chairs, dining tables and chairs and a range of baby and toddler equipment and children's toys. The kitchen provides refrigerator, freezer and cupboard space for each family to store their food items in and there is a laundry and utility room with washing machines and dryers which family can use.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The centre's policies show due regard for the promotion of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice within all aspects of the centre's operation. Difference is accepted and valued in individuals and tailor-made packages of assessment are designed to meet the unique needs of each family. Staff receive clear direction to treat everyone with respect and complete training to raise their awareness of equality and diversity issues. Parents report that they are very satisfied with how staff interact with them. For example, one parent said, 'I genuinely like staying here, it is a positive atmosphere and staff are so helpful and encouraging'.

The strong leadership and efficient organisation of the centre is underpinned by the clear management structure and a strong commitment for continuous improvement. Both the responsible person and the Registered Manager are registered with Ofsted and are well qualified for the roles they are appointed to. The stable and competent staff team are suitably qualified and experienced to understand the needs of parents and children; staff say they enjoy working at the centre and staff morale is high. Continuing professional development is given high priority. Staff benefit from access to an excellent range of training, including a very comprehensive induction programme and undertaking the National Vocational Qualification award at level 3. Staff are very well supported in their work by regular and innovative supervision and appraisal processes, team meetings and clinical discussion.

Staffing levels are provided in response to risk assessment and the identified needs of families. Staffing levels are robust and the centre's well established bank staff provide additional workers to cover planned absences and emergencies. The centre's on call system ensures that staff always have access to management advice and support. Well written policies, procedures and records contribute to promoting the welfare of families and safeguarding children and support the centre's outstanding

working practices. Staff sign against their entries in records to provide a secure record of each family's progress and history at the centre.

The centre's Statement of Purpose is reviewed on a regular basis and has been amended to include information about the use of CCTV within the centre. This document is well written and provides detailed information about the operation of the centre, its ethos, structure and staffing establishment. Families receive the residents' guide, which is clearly written, user-friendly loose-leaf documentation contained within a folder. This format ensures specific information can be easily updated to reflect the current functioning of the centre. Arrangements are made for those adults who are unable to read it to have the information explained or read to them.

The Registered Manager reviews the centre's records each month, to identify any trends or patterns and to audit the standard of assessment and care practices within the centre. The Registered Manager records the monitoring and evaluation processes and takes any action required to make improvements to effectively respond to meet each family's identified needs. Records are kept securely within the centre and suitable arrangements are made to retain records for the appropriate length of time.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure the centre's regularly undertaken fire drills are clearly recorded (NMS 22.5)
- increase the centre's planned responses to a range of foreseeable crises to include the examples identified within this standard. (NMS 22.7)