

Orchard House Greenway Road

Inspection report for Residential Family Centre

Unique reference number	SC408039
Inspection date	20/10/2010
Inspector	Jennifer Reed
Type of inspection	Key

Setting address	184 Greenway Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 6LH
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Responsible individual	Freda Veronica Gardner
Date of last inspection	09/03/2010

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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, Greenway Road is a residential family centre which can accommodate up to five families who are referred for assessment to the centre by the courts or local authority children's services. The centre enables children to live with their family in a safe and nurturing environment while care from their parent(s) or carers is assessed. 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. Throughout the assessment process, staff help adults to develop their parenting skills and also provide them with a model for a secure, safe and happy family life.

The centre's multi-disciplinary team liaise and work with local agencies and services to provide support to meet the identified needs of families. Its location enables families to easily access facilities and resources within the town.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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 looked at how well the service is meeting the key national minimum standards and relevant regulations. Staff and families participated in the inspection process.

The service commenced operation on the 12 March 2010 and since registration the centre has accommodated 13 families. The findings of this first inspection are therefore based on a limited period of operation of approximately seven months.

The centre has made a strong start and provides families with a well considered and robust service. The service benefits from being part of the Orchard House organisation which has prior knowledge and experience in the assessment of children and families. Vigilant management, well written policies, procedures and recording underpin the centre's sound working practices and contribute to safeguarding children and promoting the well-being of families. The cohesive and knowledgeable staff team deliver individual packages of assessment and support which are tailored to meet the differing needs and abilities of each family. Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare is central to all of the centre's work and the child's safety is the paramount consideration at all times.

Recruitment and selection processes are generally good. However, with regard to two recruitment matters the standard was not satisfactorily met; these omissions

have not impacted on outcomes for families. The premises provide a good standard of accommodation for families to live in although an identified ventilation problem in one en-suite bathroom is yet to be resolved.

Improvements since the last inspection

This was the first inspection of the residential family centre.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The centre's comprehensive placement plans for families identify both adult and children's health needs and take into account the resident's wishes and feelings regarding decisions concerning their welfare. Staff empower parents to take responsibility for their own and their children's well-being by talking through issues and supporting parents to arrange or attend their medical appointments. Staff demonstrate sensitivity, compassion and a non-judgemental approach when helping families to deal with their physical, emotional and mental health issues. Practices within the centre reflect the staff team's well developed understanding of how best to work with parents who may have varying needs and abilities. The centre has set up a good range of resources, advice and information packages which are suitable to help parents who have particular support needs, to develop their parenting skills.

Parents can choose to access individual support for their own needs, from specialist workers within the organisation or alternatively, staff will help parents make arrangements to receive specific services within the community. All families are registered with a local doctor and they regularly meet with health visitors who have established a good working relationship with the organisation's residential family centres. One parent said, 'we see health visitors and go to baby groups and see child development people.'

Medication is securely and appropriately 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. Medication and accident records are kept and provide a clear account of all medication, treatment and any first aid given to families. All staff complete basic level first aid courses and two members of staff have completed the 'First Aid at Work' certificated course.

The assessment programme includes opportunities for parents to learn about first aid, nutrition, diet and food hygiene. Staff show parents how to cook healthy and balanced meals for themselves and their children and help parents to budget, plan and shop for food items. Children's diets are closely monitored by staff to promote their good health and parents and children benefit from the sound advice given about the need for sufficient rest, exercise and the inclusion of 'five a day' in menu

planning. The centre's policy of zero tolerance in regard to smoking, drinking and usage of illegal substances supports parents in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Nevertheless, adults who decide to continue to smoke can do so in a specified area outside in the rear garden.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Parents and children enjoy sound relationships with staff. Staff demonstrate competency in working with adults in suitable and effective ways to meet their differing needs and abilities and parents say they are treated with respect. One parent summarised their experience by saying, 'staff are always friendly, polite and open and honest with us.'

Parents have a good understanding about the centre's accepted code of conduct and expectations of behaviour; this information is included within the resident's pack. Staff are guided in their work by the centre's policies which address lone working, professional boundaries and safeguarding practices. Parents know how to use the centre's compliment and complaint process should they wish to raise an issue and any concern is promptly dealt with.

Staff respect parents' and children's privacy within the context of the use of closed circuit television surveillance and the need to protect children. Staff show sensitivity in respecting parents' dignity and the centre considers how best to provide couples or individuals with private time. Confidentiality is understood by staff and they are clear about sharing information for child protection purposes.

Safeguarding practices within the centre are good and systems are in place for reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse and making notifications to relevant agencies. The promotion of welfare and safeguarding underpins all work within the centre and staff demonstrate rigour in taking appropriate measures to protect children. The high specification closed circuit television coverage in all areas provides a robust mechanism to keep children safe. All staff receive induction training in safeguarding and thereafter, complete more advanced levels of training covering safeguarding issues. Staff know what to do if any resident goes missing and the centre has established clear protocols for ensuring families are secure within the centre. For example, the closed circuit television covers the front door and parents are asked not to answer the door to caller. Any visitor to the centre must sign in and is only allowed supervised access to families unless other arrangements have been agreed with the relevant authorities.

Risk assessments for the premises, hazardous substances and fire have been carried out and are subject to regular review. All utility services checks were made prior to the registration of the service and regular fire safety checks and drills take place to keep families and staff safe. The centre has developed planned responses to a range of foreseeable crises to ensure that families' welfare will be promoted in the event of an emergency situation.

The organisation has recently reviewed its recruitment and selection processes and these meet the standard. Recruitment and selection processes are good and care is taken to make sure that only suitable people are employed to work within the centre. Staff are not expected to start work prior to the necessary checks having been made and interviewing is robust. However, examination of personnel files showed two omissions in safer recruitment practice; neither shortfall had impacted on outcomes for families. These were that firstly, one member of staff had previously worked in a child care setting and the centre had not taken steps to verify the reason why the employment or position ended. Secondly, although the centre had requested two written references, only one had been received prior to the start date for the new employee; the second reference was subsequently received.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

There are no key standards in this outcome.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The centre has a well defined admission process which takes steps to ensure that no placements are agreed unless the staff team believe that the centre can meet the identified needs of the family and child(ren) and the placement will be in the child(ren)'s best interests. Comprehensive viability assessments are carried out and the centre seeks parental risk assessments from the placing authority workers to inform decision making. Expectations of the placement are made clear to parents and children prior to admission. For example, families may visit the centre and all families receive the resident's information pack which tells them how the service operates. The management considers the impact of any new admission on the progress and well-being of current residents and takes any necessary steps to ensure that the welfare of all families is safeguarded. The centre has established procedures for families moving into the centre, and for leaving the centre, either with or without their children. Staff are sensitive to the needs of families when making these difficult transitions.

Individual assessment and support programmes are drawn up for each family by the centre; these are in accordance with the court's Letters of Instruction and/or placing authority directions and care plans. The centre's placement plans are excellent; they are comprehensive, based on referral information and provide staff with clear guidance on how to work and support each family member. Plans and progress are closely monitored by the multi-professional staff team who thoughtfully evaluate the assessment process and the implementation of plans. Reflection and discussion across the staff team makes sure that families receive the best support the centre can provide to facilitate a fair and unbiased assessment based on sound evidence. The centre shows expertise in finding effective ways of working with families with

learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the assessment and support programmes are tailored to meet each family's specific needs. Staff make sure that parents understand their plans and know how the assessment process will be carried out. One family said, 'we are always informed about what's happening, what's going to happen and what could happen.'

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. The centre works in partnership with parents to promote appropriate parenting skills and strategies, based on the Webster-Stratton model. User-friendly feedback forms are completed on a regular basis and given to parents to show them how well their assessment is going and to highlight the development of their parenting abilities. The forms summarise the evidence collated by the staff over a short period of time, usually for a period of a week. Parents can add their comments to this form to state their views about what has been written about them, providing them with an opportunity to express their opinions on issues or challenge any factual inaccuracy.

A formal review of each placement is undertaken every four weeks. Families also meet regularly with their key workers to discuss their progress and their feedback forms. Families report that they find the staff very approachable and feel able to talk to staff about things as they arise. For example, one parent said, 'there is always someone to talk to when there is a problem and they always try to work something out.'

Daily life within the centre is well organised, providing enough staff to accompany families outside of the centre, which makes sure that their independence is not restricted unnecessarily. Staff encourage families to take part in community leisure activities within their assessment programme, with the aim of increasing parenting capacity and the development of new skills which can be used on return home with their children. Parents take their children swimming, walking in local parks and to the library and baby/toddler groups.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The centre has been purposefully designed and organised to accommodate up to five families at any one time. The premises were fully inspected at the registration of the service in March 2010 and found to be suitable; visually, the centre looks 'as new'. A high specification closed circuit television system has been installed since registration.

The town centre is within walking distance from the premises, or families can catch a bus from just outside the house. Parks, local shops and the doctor's surgery are easily accessible on foot. Staff will sometimes drive families to their appointments, for example, when undergoing medical treatment.

The centre provides good quality accommodation and facilities for parents and children to live in. It is well furnished and decorated and there is sufficient space in bedrooms and communal areas. One family reported that there was not enough storage provided in their bedroom. The centre has responded to this information and plans to purchase more chest of drawers and put wardrobes in some rooms. Families are able to bring some personal possessions and toys to keep in their room. The rear enclosed garden provides a safe play area for children and the garden shed provides additional storage for outside toys and pushchairs.

The organisation has an efficient maintenance system in place and repairs are usually carried out promptly. As with all new premises, some building issues have arisen. For example, it was found that although there was a switch to operate an ensuite bathroom extractor fan, no fan had been actually fitted in the ceiling. This has resulted in poor ventilation of the room and water stains have appeared on the bathroom walls; this problem has not been resolved.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The centre's policies promote equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice within all aspects of service delivery. Difference is accepted and valued in individuals and tailor-made packages of assessment are designed to meet the unique needs of each family. Particular care is taken to ensure that parents who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from interventions that are helpful to them. Staff work in partnership with parents and everyone within the centre is expected to treat each other with respect. Staff complete training to raise their awareness of equality and diversity issues. The organisation has recently set up the Orchard House Trust to help families move back to their community, should they return back home with their children. Families can apply for funds through the Trust; this is innovative and exemplary practice to 'narrow the gap' for some families.

The Statement of Purpose was written for the registration of the premises and has since been reviewed and updated to reflect the current staffing and operation of the centre. Furthermore, the centre has designed a clearly written resident's guide which is given to families prior to, or on admission. This pack contains a range of useful information, including a summary of the Statement of Purpose which is written in larger print and has pictures, providing a more user-friendly version for families to read. Staff discuss this information with families during their orientation period, making sure they give sufficient time to families for them to gain a clear understanding of the centre's operation and their assessment placement.

The recently established staff team work very well together, led by the Registered Manager who has substantial experience of working within a residential family centre setting and working with people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Three members of the centre's dedicated staff team have transferred within the

organisation and all members of the team bring a range of experience, knowledge and qualification to support the centre's work with families. The Orchard House organisation employs a number of qualified professionals, including chartered clinical psychologists, social workers and a health visitor who work across the organisation, providing multi-professional support and interventions which benefit parents and children.

Staff are well supported by the well written policies, procedures and guidance and the established working structures within the organisation. Handover sessions between each change of staffing are carried out effectively and efficiently to ensure that families receive a consistent and safe service. Staff receive regular supervision, delivered in innovative ways and appraisal and personal development planning systems are in place. Team meetings are held monthly and minutes are taken; these records do not always show that there has been an agenda for each meeting. Nevertheless, examination of minutes show that at each meeting, specific policies are discussed to ensure that staff are aware and understand them. This is good practice. Furthermore, staff benefit from a very comprehensive induction programme and a good range of training opportunities.

The centre is well managed and the Registered Manager vigilantly monitors and evaluates practice and recording to ensure that the service is meeting the changing needs of families within their assessment placement. The registered person visits the centre on a regular basis and meets with parents and children to ascertain their views about the service they receive. Senior management demonstrate a strong commitment to improvement and are striving to provide an exemplary service. Questionnaires are given to families on discharge, to gather their views about their placement, to help inform the centre about where improvements may be required. Most comments have been positive. For example, one family wrote to staff at the end of their assessment placement, saying, 'we have felt so lucky to be in Orchard House, we could prove we could bring up our children and we learned new things.'

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 written record of the recruitment process includes evidence that meets all requirements of Schedule 2 of the Residential Family Centre Regulations 2002; in particular, to verify the reason why the employment or position ended where a person has previously worked in a position where their duties involved work with children or vulnerable adults (NMS 15.1)
- ensure that staff members do not start work at the centre until all the checks required in the Residential Family Centre Regulations 2002 are completed; in particular, ensure two written references are received (NMS 15.4)

- ensure that the ventilation of all parts of the premises is satisfactory; in particular, in relation to en-suite bathrooms (NMS 21.3)
- ensure team meetings have an agenda.(NMS 17.9).