

Orchard House Greenway Road

Inspection report for residential family centre

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Inspector Jennifer Reed
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Date of last inspection 20/10/2010

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Service information

Brief description of the service

Orchard House is a privately owned residential family centre. It is registered to accommodate up to five families who are referred for assessment to the centre by the courts or local authority children's services.

The centre provides evidence-based parenting assessments, including working with parents with learning difficulties and disabilities, physical and mental health conditions, personality disorders and drug and alcohol addiction.

Orchard House provides a range of additional specialist assessments and interventions if required. The organisation also operates a family house in the town where community-based assessments can be completed.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Requires improvement: a service that may meet minimum requirements but is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of a good judgement.

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall experiences of children and parents

Overall experiences of children and parents **Outstanding**

Strong and effective leadership and management arrangements support the centre's high aspirations for children and their parents. Knowledgeable and committed staff help parents to develop their parenting skills to bring about sustained improvements in their lives.

The centre's highly effective working arrangements with other professionals and services contribute to excellent planning, leading to high quality individualised assessments and support for children and families.

Evidence-based assessments meet the requirements of the courts and placing authorities to effectively inform future decision-making for children.

Assessments make a clear distinction between parenting capacity and the support, advice and guidance parents receive. Well written assessments take account of parents' views throughout the process, helping them to demonstrate their parenting capacity to fully meet their children's needs.

Parents, extended family members and professionals praise the safe, nurturing and inclusive nature of this residential family centre, emphasising the sensitivity and the skills of the staff team, and the centre's good communication and information

sharing.

Safeguarding practice is rigorous throughout all aspects of the centre's work. The established practice of securing all parents' and children's medication in the staff office is overly cautious. Individual risk assessments are not undertaken to establish the level of concern posed by a parent keeping and self-administering their own medication.

Areas of improvement

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation:

Ensure parents who are old enough and able to do so can keep and take their own medication unless the family placement plan stipulates otherwise. (NMS 6.7)

Inspection judgements

Quality of assessment

Outstanding

The quality of assessments and reports is excellent. The centre shows rigour in taking full account of the courts' or placing authorities' directions and requirements. The purpose and scope of the assessment reflect the referral information and court letters of instruction. Feedback from court professionals and partner agencies is consistently positive. They commented, 'the Judge found the evidence compelling and accepted it in its entirety'; and 'the assessment process is well balanced between assessment and support, with open sharing of information with the parent'.

Assessments are evidence-based, chronologically recorded and evaluative. Excellent liaison with other professionals, both prior to admission and throughout the assessment, contributes significantly to the high quality of assessment reports. Clear and realistic recommendations are well evidenced in reports.

Qualified and experienced social workers lead the assessment process and write the reports. Staff demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of child development and attachment issues. Staff are experienced in working with a range of established evidence-based theoretical models of practice. The multi-disciplinary team contributes to assessments having a clear focus on the needs of children, identifying risk, and an understanding of the impact of their past history on the capacity of parents to care for and protect their children.

Parents who experience physical or learning disabilities, or mental health and drug and alcohol conditions benefit from the excellent individualised support they receive to help them to improve their parenting skills. Innovative support takes into account parents' differing abilities and levels of understanding to effectively help them to learn new parenting skills. A parent said, 'I am using picture cards to show me how to do things and this is really helping me to do things that I couldn't do before'. A Guardian Ad Litem commented, 'the registered manager was very patient, a planning meeting took three hours as she wanted to make sure the parent really understood everything about the operation of the centre and the assessment.'

Staff provide parents with flexible support and guidance and opportunities to demonstrate their capacity to fully meet their child's needs. Parents receive an outstanding level of individualised support, which is sensitively delivered to help them consider the impact of their parenting on their child's welfare and development. For example, staff help parents to become more adept at successfully completing basic care tasks, by role modelling and supporting them to attend a range of educational workshops. A solicitor said, 'I never expected the outcome of the assessment – a positive one for the family to go back to the community with their child. They are now back living in the community and doing well'.

Parents are extremely positive about their experience of the assessment process. They highlight the kindness, patience and outstanding support they receive to improve their parenting capability. The formalised weekly reviews of progress help

parents to understand their strengths and the areas they need to improve upon. Staff encourage parents to participate in the review of their assessment and their progress. They seek and take account of children's views about the standard of care parents are providing.

Parents have an opportunity to challenge the assessment process and where appropriate changes result in how the assessment is progressed. Staff support parents to use advocacy services to ensure their views are heard and taken into account. The final assessment report is shared with parents and they are helped to understand and accept the outcome of their assessment.

How well children and parents are protected and helped

Outstanding

Safeguarding children is given a high priority at all times. Children are protected from harm by the centre's exceptionally robust safeguarding arrangements and practice. High regard is given to ensuring vulnerable parents are protected. Staff understand and recognise adult protection concerns and they take effective action to safeguard vulnerable adults, facilitating or providing access to additional services and support that individuals may require.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are well established and effective arrangements with the police and child and adult protection services contribute to keeping children and parents safe. The social work team has substantial safeguarding knowledge and experience and demonstrates an excellent understanding of safeguarding and protection matters. Staff know how to deal effectively with incidents of adults or children going missing and how to report and manage any suspicions or allegations of harm.

Staff are rigorous in gathering pre-admission information to assist them in planning the assessment process. Parents receive a copy of 'The Resident's Guide', which tells them about the work of the centre. Staff take sufficient time with them to make sure that they fully understand the information.

Detailed and collaborative planning takes place on the family's admission to the centre. Assessments clearly identify risks, or likely risks, and considers case histories to identify what actions the centre must take to keep children and adults safe during the assessment. Parents are encouraged and supported to participate in planning and to take part and share their thoughts and opinions in the subsequent weekly reviews of their assessment. They can raise any concerns they have or make a complaint. Complaints are well managed and any necessary action is taken to promptly remedy concerns, ensuring children's and parents' welfare and safety is protected.

Excellent attention is given to ensuring each assessment is 'tailor-made' to take account of the diverse and individual needs of children and their families. Staff identify innovative ways to help and protect children and parents during the assessment. Staff undertake any specialist training required to make sure they have

sufficient skills to safely meet and support the particular needs of children and parents coming to the centre for assessment. Professionals report very positively about the help and protection children and parents receive. One said, 'This was a high risk and complex case and I was impressed that the centre would take it'.

Risk management within the centre is exceptionally strong, led by the registered manager who demonstrates an outstanding level of practice. The centre's effective and collaborative ways of working enable good access to information and specialist advice, effective identification of levels of risk and action to minimise risk.

The centre is extremely vigilant in its monitoring of family interactions; the welfare of children and their safety is paramount at all times. The centre operates three levels of surveillance to ensure that children are kept safe and their needs are being satisfactorily met by their parent(s). It is routine practice within the centre for parents and children to be very closely monitored during the first 72 hours of the assessment. This enables staff to gather information and to be assured that the assessment plan in place will protect children and parents. Staff explain the purpose and functioning of the surveillance system fitted in the centre and gain the consent of parents to use it. Parents are clear about the centre's policy on the use of surveillance and understand how private space and time is available to them.

Staff are skilled at knowing when they need to intervene to support parents to meet the child's needs. Direct work with parents helps them to bond with their child and to develop appropriate and secure attachments; for example, by parents attending learning workshops.

Staff understand the impact of a residential assessment on children and parents and this is considered in the parenting support provided to them. The centre is innovative and flexible in its assessments to ensure parents receive effective parenting support during their assessment in order to give them every opportunity to demonstrate their parenting capacity. For example, extended family members, if appropriate, may stay at the centre to support a parent during the assessment.

Staff show expertise in managing relationships between families living at the centre. Any challenging or anti-social behaviour is well managed by staff, minimising risk to children and adults within the centre.

Arrangements for the management and administration of medication are safe. All medication, for both parents and children, is kept securely within the staff office. This routine practice is not informed by individual risk assessment to ascertain the capacity of individual parents to safely keep and administer their personal medication.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers Outstanding

Strong and effective leadership and management arrangements deliver exemplary practice to make positive differences to the lives of children and parents. The clear ethos within the centre is that all staff will do everything they can to support parents

to improve their parenting abilities and help them to safely care for their children. Leaders are clear that the centre will only assess families where it is in the best interests of children and parents. Pre-admission viability assessments and the continuous review of children's and parents' well-being while in assessment focus on how practice is effectively meeting individuals' needs.

The responsible individual and the registered manager provide strong leadership and bring a high level of expertise to the centre's work to bring about positive change for children and families. They have high aspirations for the service and the families they support. The centre is efficiently managed. Leaders and managers have a clear vision for the future development of the service and demonstrate a strong focus on continuous improvement. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the service and there is evidence to show robust action is taken to bring about improvement in the quality of practice and the premises. The four recommendations made at the previous inspection have been satisfactorily met.

The responsible individual maintains a robust oversight of the centre's operation through carrying out comprehensive monthly monitoring visits and regularly visiting the centre. Monitoring within the service is effective. The responsible individual listens to staff, children's and parents' views about the quality of the service and takes action as appropriate to bring about improvement.

The responsible individual and the registered manager demonstrate an outstanding knowledge of current legislative requirements. A thorough review of the service is being undertaken set against the regulations and standards. Best practice is shared with the staff team. All significant events relating to the welfare and protection of children and adults are notified to the appropriate authorities. Recruitment and selection processes meet the requirements of safer recruitment guidance, contributing to the protection of children and parents.

The registered manager has been in post since 2013. She is well qualified and experienced and effectively leads the staff team to deliver a high quality service. She is currently studying for a recognised management award. The registered manager takes effective action in response to emerging concerns to ensure the safety and well-being of children and parents.

The centre is sufficiently staffed and resourced. Training is effectively planned and staff receive relevant training to enable them to provide high quality assessments of parenting skills. Staff receive regular supervision to support them in their tasks and help them reflect on their personal practice. The staff team demonstrates competency and strong teamwork.

The centre provides children and parents with a comfortable home during their assessment. It is well maintained, equipped and decorated. Its location enables families to easily access facilities and resources within the town.

Working with partners to improve outcomes Outstanding

The centre is highly effective in liaising and working in partnership with other professionals and local services to provide good quality support, care and protection to children and families. The outstanding ability of staff to positively engage with partner agencies results in strong collaborative working arrangements that support parents and children throughout the period of assessment.

The centre has established strong working arrangements with the police to help to support and protect parents and children. The level of police involvement is low. A police presence is appropriately planned and requested as a precautionary measure when the behaviour of parents is likely to be unpredictable. This approach reduces the possibility of parents becoming unnecessarily involved in the criminal justice system and ensures the protection of children.

Well-embedded arrangements operate between the residential family centre and the medical centre. Staff work closely with doctors, health visitors and midwives to support families' health needs. This contributes to parents and children receiving an excellent level of health care to promote and sustain their well-being. Specialist advice is gained from the Specialist Lactating Nurse to help parents with breast-feeding.

The centre demonstrates outstanding working partnerships with placing authority social workers, legal teams and Children and Family Court Advisory Service workers (CAFCASS). Professionals commented, 'There is very good communication and sharing of information'. Leaders and managers place a high value on developing and maintaining collaborative working arrangements with partner agencies. The responsible individual invites key persons from the local authority to visit the centre to build and enhance the quality of partnership working. Plans are in place for the hospital's safeguarding nurse to visit the centre to further embed joint working practice.

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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework for the inspection of residential family centres.