

Orchard House Family Assessment Centre

Orchard House Family Assessment Centre Limited
Orchard House, Fons George, Taunton, Somerset TA1 3JS
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential family centre

Orchard House is a residential family centre for up to six families, who are referred for assessment to the centre via the courts or local authority children's services. Families have their own bedrooms and they share communal areas such as the kitchen and lounge. The organisation has invested in a separate building with offices and a well-equipped play room so that families can attend assessment and specialist sessions away from their living environment.

The centre enables children to live safely with their family 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. The centre's multi-disciplinary team liaises and works 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.

Inspection dates: 20 to 21 June 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and parents, taking into account	good
How well children and parents are helped and protected	good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good

The residential family centre provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 29 June 2015

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This residential family centre is good because:

- Children and parents receive well-planned care and support when staying at this family centre.
- Leaders and managers are committed to achieving the best outcomes for children. They offer excellent support and challenge to staff. They are visible and available to parents, children and staff. The staff team works in partnership with other professionals to ensure that children receive the best services and care.
- The quality of assessment work is excellent. Social workers and other staff members receive training on attachment and all necessary aspects of assessment. The psychological input by the service is a particular strength. Assessment reports are timely and of a high standard. Recommendations assist local authority professionals and the judiciary in making best decisions for children.
- Managers and staff are child-focused. If an assessment is not progressing as it should or it is apparent that a child is at risk, they communicate this information to parents and professionals promptly, taking action where necessary. Consequently, delays to assessments rarely occur.
- The managers and staff manage risk well. They forward plan and regularly review assessments to ensure that supervision arrangements are necessary and safe.
- The family centre is a well-maintained, welcoming and clean environment.

The residential family centre's areas for development:

- Parents do not have use of some facilities, such as wi-fi, which impacts on their day-to-day experiences in an already pressured situation.
- Some parents expressed concern about not being able to go out with their child due to lack of availability of staff, and not having feedback shared with them as frequently as agreed in their plan.
- Greater review and analysis of the work of the family centre, management information and parent feedback would assist the formation of an action plan, to identify areas for development and to make improvements.

- Safer recruitment guidelines are not always followed by staff. However, when managers became aware of this shortfall during the inspection, they took immediate action to resolve outstanding gaps in information to ensure the safety of children and parents.

What does the residential family centre need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The assessments are carried out by a registered social worker in a manner consistent with guidance in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. (National Minimum Standard 1.2)
- Parents are engaged in the process and provided with regular feedback. (National Minimum Standard 1.8)
- Ensure the use of surveillance does not intrude unnecessarily on the privacy of parents and children (National Minimum Standard 10)
- The centre provides facilities for the care of babies and children of all ages. (National Minimum Standard 11.4)

In particular, review the availability, extent and organisation of current facilities in relation to wi-fi, food storage, food and bottle preparation.

- The overall number, competence and deployment of staff, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, can fulfil the centre's statement of purpose and meet the individual needs of all the parents and children resident at the centre. (National Minimum Standard 15.1)

In particular, review staffing arrangements across both centres to reduce the number of different staff working in the centre and review staff availability to meet children's needs when out in the community with their parents.

- There are clear and effective procedures of monitoring and controlling the activities of the centre. Parents and children of an appropriate age are regularly involved in contributing to monitoring the operation of the centre. (National Minimum Standard 19.1)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and parents: good

The quality of the parent and child assessment work carried out is excellent and a particular strength of this family centre. Families receive highly individualised and expert services from a multi-disciplinary team of professionals. Parents are given every opportunity to succeed while staff ensure that the child's best interests are paramount. Appropriate support is given to help improve parenting capacity, but not at the expense of trying to effect change outside the remit of assessment. Therefore, timely and effective assessments are completed with clear recommendations to assist the courts and professionals in making the best decisions for children. Such practice prevents delay to children's planning and gives children the best opportunity to form secure attachments with their permanent care givers.

Feedback to parents is delivered sensitively and respectfully by staff in a child-focused manner. The family centre continues to use the 'signs of safety' model and are leading innovators in this area of practice. Using this method helps families and to more easily understand why they are being assessed, what areas of parenting are being focused on and what changes need to happen. Clearly written information is made available regularly and parents are clear about what progress they have made and what aspects of their parenting need to improve. Some parents would like to receive feedback more regularly than they do and staff have not always been able to be available to undertake this task in accordance with the agreed plan.

Parents' day-to-day experiences could be improved in some areas. At the time of the inspection, nine parents shared a kitchen that is not of a size to accommodate a dining room table. The kitchen has recently been refurbished to a good standard but has only one large cooker and two kettles. Parents have to share these limited facilities, which on occasion leads to difficulties. Parents do not have equipment in their bedrooms to make drinks, prepare bottles or store food.

Parents cannot access wi-fi in the family centre, which makes it more difficult and costly to communicate with extended family and professionals, such as solicitors and advocates, during a stressful time in their lives.

Parents are sometimes unable to leave the centre with their children, or go out as often as they need to, due to a shortage of staff being available to supervise them. It is important for families to go out and develop confidence in the community and for children to receive outside stimulation.

How well children and parents are helped and protected: good

The safety of children and parents is prioritised due to leaders and managers comprehensively assessing risk from the point of a referral through to the end of parent and child assessments and beyond. Appropriate plans are put in place to address any risks identified.

Managers scrutinise new referrals carefully, considering the well-being and safety of those families already in residence. Leaders and managers accept just over 20% of the viability assessments they carry out, which demonstrates a carefully thought through admissions process.

Incidents are managed well. Staff identify and address issues of concern with parents respectfully and at the earliest stage possible. They work openly and honestly with parents, delivering information and difficult messages in a sensitive manner and preparing ahead to minimise distress to those involved.

Managers communicate effectively with the DO (designated officer) and safeguarding agencies. If an allegation is made or a concern about practice is raised, managers take the appropriate action to ensure the safety of children and families.

The use of video surveillance is being reviewed to ensure that it is no more intrusive than necessary, and that parents' dignity is preserved while children's safety is ensured.

At the last inspection, a requirement was made in relation to safer recruitment practice. Some recruitment files still did not comply with safer recruitment guidelines and contain some unexplained gaps in employment history and missing identity information. However, during the inspection, the registered manager took immediate action to rectify these concerns. Managers are reviewing all files to ensure that they comply with safer recruitment guidance.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders, managers and staff work tirelessly to meet the needs of children and achieve the aims of the assessment and plans for children. They have a clear understanding of the level of progress made for children and so encourage assessments to move on where appropriate, so that families are assessed in the most realistic way possible.

Managers and staff work in partnership with other agencies to ensure that well thought out and clear advice is given to parents. For example, managers and staff met with local health visitors regularly so that guidance for parents on the care of their babies is consistent. The staff team also links families with local community resources and assist families whose home is further away.

In order to secure the best outcomes for children, leaders and managers have effective contact with other professionals and challenge concerns where necessary. Commissioners report that the family centre is professionally run and assessments are regularly reviewed in relation to levels of supervision. Social workers and guardians speak highly of the centre's work.

The organisation has another separately registered family centre, which is a short drive away. The staff team are shared between the two centres, which means that

families have to get to know more staff. However, there is a team leader based in each centre to provide some consistency.

Staff shortages have recently resulted in not all assessments being carried out by a registered social worker. This is not in line with national minimum standards. The assessments remain of an excellent quality and have been completed by a qualified psychologist. Managers and leaders are recruiting new social workers. This will also allow the registered manager more time to focus on her role.

The responsible individual completes monthly monitoring reports reviewing the quality of care and the conduct of the family centre. Leaders and managers have identified some areas for improvement. They acknowledge that analysis and review of parental feedback and the impact of their work on children's outcomes could be developed further to address outstanding issues and enable an action plan to be formulated.

Staff in the centre feel valued and supported by leaders and managers. Regular and effective individual and group supervision, reflection and training are prioritised. The organisation's culture allows staff to feel confident about learning from mistakes and supporting improvement.

The centre's environment is well-maintained and clean, both inside and outside. Any problems are promptly fixed and the organisation employs a caretaker to ensure this standard is maintained.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and parents. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and parents. They watched how professional staff work with children and parents and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and parents. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the residential family centre knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and parents whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Residential Family Centre Regulations 2002 and the national minimum standards.

Residential family centre details

Unique reference number: SC066535

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Inspectors

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