

St Michael's Fellowship, 52 Palace Road

Inspection report for Residential Family Centre

Unique reference number	SC047206
Inspection date	05/11/2010
Inspector	Cheryl Carter
Type of inspection	Key

Setting address	52 Palace Road, LONDON, SW2 3NJ
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Date of last inspection	15/01/2008

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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

This service is a family assessment centre, managed by an established charity. The service promotes the protection and development of children by educating and supporting young mothers to develop good parenting skills. The parents' capacity to respond to the children's needs and to safeguard their welfare is assessed and the parents are given advice and guidance to enable them to care for their child or children effectively. The stated aims include providing fair, objective and comprehensive assessments of families to assist local authorities and the courts to make decisions for the welfare of the child. The premises comprise of a large spacious detached house with six individual bed-sitting rooms, each having its own kitchenette. Communal space includes a large lounge and playroom and garden with a play area. An additional kitchen is located on the ground floor and is used for teaching sessions and for occasional communal meals.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was a key unannounced inspection. All of the key standards were inspected. This is an outstanding service, which demonstrates excellent outcomes for its service users. The centre works closely with health professionals, social workers and other agencies to ensure that the needs of those using the service can be fully met. Parents benefit from positive and respectful relationships with the staff. Children are protected through the implementation of robust policies that place their welfare at the forefront of service delivery. Staff benefit from being well supported by effective management, and written records are generally comprehensive. There are sound and robust monitoring and quality assurance systems in place.

Three good practice recommendations have been made to further enhance the services provided.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Families benefit from excellent health promotion and the health care provided at the centre. Staff empower parents by enabling them to take responsibility for

maintaining their own and their children's health and well-being. Staff provide advice and guidance to help parents to recognise health issues and this supports parents in making informed choices about their family's health needs. The staff demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of both physical and emotional health matters. Staff complete a certificated course in first aid which includes training on how to resuscitate babies and children. There is training in the safe handling of medication planned for December, however only one member of staff has had training in food hygiene and safe food handling.

Staff ensure that children's health needs are promoted and met. For example, staff implement placement plans which clearly outline children's identified health needs, and record their development. Staff encourage parents to work closely with health visitors, ensuring that children receive regular developmental checks, vaccinations and immunisations. One parent said that the health visitor has come to the home to see her and her baby since she moved in. There are arrangements for families to be registered with a local doctor's surgery and families are supported to access specialist medical services as required. The health visitor attends the centre every month and there is clear information relating to health and well-being posted on the notice board.

Parents are responsible for the administration of medication to their children and each family room has a lockable cabinet for the safe storage of medication. The centre obtains prior written permission from parents, for each child, in case a staff member needs to give first aid or medication to their child. There are first aid boxes on each floor; these enable parents to quickly respond to their family's minor injuries.

Accidents are recorded in detail. 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. Fruit is always available within the centre and parents are asked to introduce fruit into their children's diets.

The centre provides a clean and healthy environment for families to live in and infection control measures are robust. For example, when young babies are staying in the home, antiseptic hand gel is used when entering the premises. Parents are encouraged 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, when this is required, to support and sustain their interests and build their confidence and skills. Staff liaise with the local authority to find suitable educational opportunities for parents and children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Procedural guidelines on confidentiality and privacy are well balanced between each family's right to privacy and confidentiality and the need to protect children. Each family has their own room with a kitchen and each has a key to their room; this provides each family with an excellent level of privacy. The centre has a large communal lounge and shared bathroom facilities on each floor. All personal information is kept securely in locked cabinets. The families have access to a private phone when required.

Families say they enjoy positive relationships within the centre and feel they are listened to. A clear and comprehensive and complaints forms are displayed in a prominent place near the notice board. There is also a suggestion box that families can use in order to suggest changes or highlight any concerns. The complaints process is explained in initial key working sessions and all parties sign to say they understand the procedure. The complaints file holds records of a number of complaints all of which were resolved and the complainant informed of the outcome in writing.

The service is able to effectively safeguard the children in its care. All staff receive updated safeguarding training that is updated yearly. Staff demonstrated a sound awareness and understanding of the local authority's and the service's safeguarding procedures. The centre's written procedural guidance is clear and accurate. There are clear risk assessments which are updated regularly and placement plans are agreed with placing authorities. During daily handovers risks are identified and strategies developed to address these. Clear basic house rules ensure children are kept safe and respect is fostered between the families in residence. The staff are aware of the need to report significant incidents to Ofsted; however, the one incident that was reported lacked essential details.

There are robust systems to ensure staff are carefully selected and vetted. All visitors are required to sign in and out of the premises and their movements, while on site, are appropriately monitored. Risk assessments, servicing records and weekly auditing checks are up to date and the centre has sufficient insurance cover. Staff and residents understand the fire evacuation procedures. Names of staff and families that participate in fire drills are recorded. These processes ensure the ongoing physical protection of those in residence.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

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 when this is considered to be in each child's best interests. Staff demonstrate care and are very sensitive in their responses when dealing with families coming into or leaving the centre. Consideration is given to the mix of the families resident at any one time and the impact this may have on each family's 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 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 feedback forms on progress are completed and given to parents. Parents also fill in a feedback form at the end of the assessment. In most cases these are completed even if the outcome was not favourable to the parent.

Daily reports are written about how the progress of the placement is going. Staff discuss this report with parents to help them to understand how the assessment is progressing and to evaluate how they are meeting the agreed objectives. Assessments and reporting are consistent with the Department of Health Assessment Framework Children in Need and their Families. Staff are trained to effectively complete these assessments.

Progress is reviewed every week 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 using the suggestion box.

Empowering parents is fundamental to the assessment placement. The centre aims to reduce any restrictions on independence and promote opportunities for parents to make everyday choices for themselves and their children. Staff work flexibly to provide support and supervise families who wish to spend time away from the centre so that they can take part in community activities.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Families benefit from living in a safe, clean, well-maintained environment that provides comfortable accommodation and appropriate furnishings and equipment.

The house is a large house in a quiet residential road with good access to public transport. The accommodation is provided over three floors and there is a fairly well maintained rear garden. Bedrooms vary in size and this ensures that families of different sizes can be comfortably accommodated. All rooms are clean, well maintained and suitably furnished. The house provides two communal lounges, and shared bathrooms on all floors. A separate laundry room is shared by those in residence. The house is well furnished to a standard that is appropriate to the age, development, cultural and ethnic background of the parents and children accommodated.

The interior and exterior of the premises are maintained in a very good state of structural and decorative repair. Damage to the premises is reported promptly. The gardens and play equipment are monitored to ensure they are well maintained. The garden is a smoking area for families and this has a number of cigarette butts discarded in it. However, the manager is currently exploring alternatives to ensure the practice of disposing of cigarette butts in the garden ceases.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The Statement of Purpose clearly sets out the centre's vision and describes the services it provides. Stakeholders are clear about what the service can and cannot offer. The information is available in an easily understood format.

The management of the service is dynamic and proactive and this ensures an effective and excellent service has been developed with successful outcomes for many families. The management culture is open and inclusive, as demonstrated by the ways in which it addresses the individual needs of parents and their children. The manager of the service demonstrated a proactive approach to working in partnership to ensure continuous improvement of the service. Staff and service users feel that they are given quality leadership and excellent support and that their views are welcomed valued and included.

There is a clear system to cover the manager's absences and staff are confident about who to contact in specific situations. Staff members placed in charge of the centre and other staff are suitably qualified and experienced for their roles and responsibilities.

The staff team is experienced, and highly competent. There is a good mix of race, and age, which means that families will usually find someone with whom they can readily identify and build a positive relationship. Although there are no male residential staff, male role models are provided by the male staff that run the fortnightly fathers' workshops. There is a structured induction and training plan for all staff. The number of staff on duty at any given time meets the needs of the parents and children effectively and supports them in their assessments, activities, visits and appointments.

There are monthly monitoring visits, conducted by the Registered Provider, and these are fully recorded in writing. These visits are centred on the experiences of parents, children and staff, all of whom are fully involved in this process. Findings are integrated into the quality assurance systems of the service and are used to inform the continuing service development plans.

The Registered Manager reviews the centre's records every three months, to identify any trends or patterns and to audit the standard of assessment and care practices. The findings of the review are recorded and action is taken when improvements are needed to ensure that each family's identified needs are being met. Records are kept securely within the centre and suitable arrangements are made to retain records for the appropriate length of time.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Equality and diversity standards are upheld to an excellent standard. Staff display a non-judgemental attitude and every effort is made to ensure that issues of diversity are considered within the staff team. Residents are valued and respected, regardless of their ethnic, religious, economic or cultural backgrounds.

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 that there is a system in place to notify within 24 hours the persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events (NMS 13.1)
- ensure that all areas of the gardens are well maintained (NMS 22.3)
- ensure that staff receive training in health and safety at work, including food hygiene and safety with medicines. (NMS18.5)