

# Newington Manor Family Support Service

Inspection report for Residential Family Centre

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<b>Inspector</b>	Sophie Wood
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<b>Registered person</b>	Symbol Family Support Services Limited
<b>Registered manager</b>	Teresa Ann Duffy
<b>Responsible individual</b>	Christopher John Duffy
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	18/06/2008

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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

Newington Manor is located in a quiet rural area, within easy reach of Sittingbourne town centre and the M2 and M20 motorways. The premises comprise a large listed property, which houses the administrative team and rooms for five of the families. A separate purpose built, single storey building offers accommodation for a further three families.

The service aims to provide an expert assessment to the courts and local authorities of the parenting capacity of those in residence, with emphasis placed upon the presenting needs and safety of children within each family. The service is primarily concerned with providing a service to parents who possess a primary diagnosis of a learning disability. Senior managers of the service possess the qualifications, skills and relevant experience commensurate to provide such a service.

### Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This announced, key inspection was conducted over two days by one inspector and all of the key standards were fully explored. The service has no previous actions or recommendations.

Parents and their children can be assured that they will receive a professional and thorough assessment, with the needs of the children concerned of paramount importance.

The team is qualified and experienced; able to conduct a fair and realistic assessment of parents with a primary diagnosis of a learning disability, some with additional mental health difficulties, with regards to their capacity to effectively parent their children.

Great emphasis is placed upon safety factors and this is evidenced through robust recruitment practices, thorough risk assessments and collaborative working with all other relevant professional agencies.

Service users are respected and they receive the help, support and advice they need to complete their assessment with a realistic chance of leaving the service with their children. In the event that they are not successful, they can be assured that the service operates openly and honestly, focusing upon providing appropriate and effective support in dealing with such difficult news.

Two recommendations have been made from this inspection, neither of which have a direct impact upon service user safety or welfare.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

This service does not have any previous actions or recommendations.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

The implementation of robust initial assessment and referral processes ensures the service is in receipt of clear and accurate health related information with regards to the families who are about to move into the centre. Such good practice ensures that immediate risk assessments are completed, which serve to protect and effectively plan for, the unique presenting health needs of every family.

At inception, families are registered with local core health services; where necessary, local health visiting services are notified without delay. Babies and young children therefore receive the input they need to ensure their ongoing health needs are effectively monitored and provided for.

The service employs a number of key staff who possess a range of qualifications and experience with regards to appropriate professional health backgrounds. This includes professionally qualified therapists and nurses. However, the service is mindful of the need to work collaboratively with local National Health Services (NHS) and therefore, appropriate external referrals are made and supported.

Families receive explicitly clear guidance and support with regards to a wide range of health matters. Written information is translated into symbolic formats and is further verbally translated by key workers at the earliest opportunity. Service users say, 'important information is clearly explained about me and my child keeping healthy'.

Generic health appointments are supported where necessary, and written records of these are clear. The service also provides numerous teaching groups and support sessions aimed at educating parents to understand the importance of utilising their local health care services. Initial written or symbolic information reliably informs parents of the centre's rules and expectations with regards to smoking, alcohol and substance misuse.

The service offers a wide range of services aimed at health promotion. These include individual therapeutic and teaching sessions, group work and external referrals to outside professional agencies. All staff members are suitably trained in paediatric first aid and medical consent for treatment is seen to have been obtained with regards to all of the files inspected. Medication held on the premises is safely stored and its use is robustly recorded. Parents receive the guidance and support they need to store and administer this, in response to the presenting needs of themselves and their children.

The service employs a dedicated activities coordinator who, among other subjects, delivers weekly workshops with regards to cookery sessions. These deliver an

educative approach, whereby parents are enabled to question the value of the use of processed foods against preparing meals from fresh ingredients. Such activity was observed at this inspection and parents stated, 'I never knew how much salt was in processed meals' and 'I think it's really easy to cook properly now and I understand how important it is'.

The acquisition of basic parenting skills, such as nappy changing and feeding, is further enhanced through the provision of individual and group sessions aimed at the importance of play. Parents speak very positively about this aspect, stating, 'I've found these sessions really helpful' and 'I've learnt how much my child learns through play. I didn't realise this before'.

Kitchen areas are suitably separated into individual areas; they are clean and well equipped. Parents are actively encouraged to take responsibility for maintaining these areas themselves, as well as utility appliances. Such guidance suitably equips them to take these lessons into their own home environments when they leave the service.

Initial resident's information advises new service users of the local provision with regards to leisure and employment services. Care files hold clear details to demonstrate these areas are discussed between parents and key workers. A clear ongoing piece of work focuses upon supporting parents to take responsibility with regards to budgeting and financial planning.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Families can be assured that the confidential information held about them is robustly protected. It is shared only with those who need to know. Staff's office space is suitably private, yet a creative and sympathetic approach enables service users to access staff members whenever necessary, without the need for seeking complicated permission or feeling that certain areas are restricted. Care files and other written information is securely stored and staff receive appropriate training and guidance on this subject. Families entering the centre are routinely reminded that their own information is not shared with other families and they are respectfully asked not to enquire about the circumstances of their peers.

Complaint's processes are clear and easily understood by all parties. Parents confirm these are taken seriously, yet they further state that the need for a formal process is rarely necessary. 'You just tell a staff member if something is bothering you and it gets sorted out.' A separate file, retained by the manager, holds clear details of historic and current complaints, from service users and third parties. Details of investigation processes and outcomes are clear. Internal monitoring systems demonstrate that these are scrutinised to enable patterns and trends to be identified, with an attempt to ensure that lessons are learnt, with future practice improved as a direct result.

The service is primarily concerned with the protection of the babies and children accommodated. Policies and procedures concerned with vulnerable adult and child protection are effective. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding and this is underpinned by clear and up to date training records. Evidence is in place to demonstrate that referrals and consultations are made, where necessary to local and placing authorities. Disruption meetings are requested appropriately.

Robust recruitment processes ensure that families residing at the centre are suitably protected. Prospective staff members are subject to stringent checks and do not commence with their employment until all such checks and references are satisfactorily received. New staff members shadow experienced colleagues until they are deemed as fit to work independently, however long this takes.

The physical environment offers excellent levels of safety and security. Physical perimeters are suitably restricted and the identity and purpose of all visitors is stringently authenticated before access to the site is permitted. Access to service users is subsequently monitored, and where necessary, supervised.

Families understand the importance of fire safety and evacuations are regularly practised. Written records show that fire safety checks are up to date and the equipment and systems are regularly serviced. The fire risk assessment is currently under review.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is not judged.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Referral and initial assessment processes are detailed, specific and clear, in the very best interests of those about to be, or who currently are accommodated by the service. Although recent changes to external policy and legislative guidance have had a potentially negative impact, the senior management team has taken a proactive approach to ensure that initial risk assessments effectively minimise the immediate concerns and enables families to be admitted into the service in the safest possible way.

Appropriate referrals to the required external professional services are made, and the babies and children are supervised and monitored by the staff team upon inception while pertinent risk assessments of the parents are undertaken: it is the service's general philosophy and practice that the needs of the babies and children involved are of the primary concern from the commencement of a placement.

Initial placement plans clearly reflect the potential concerns of the placing authority or court, including the details of the 'letter of instruction'. Parents are immediately advised, in ways appropriate to their own levels of understanding, as to the purpose of their assessment and what this means in realistic terms. Parents say, 'I know what my time here means'.

Care files are laid out in a simplistic, yet meaningful way. Parents understand this, and this finding is further demonstrated through direct interviews with them. Assessment criteria is obvious and readily understood by all parties. Interim reports and assessment plans are carefully explained to parents. They say, 'I know what I need to do to demonstrate that I can take care for my baby / child'. The findings of interim reports are shared with parents to ensure that the outcome of the final report is of no surprise.

Review meetings are clearly recorded and accurately reflect the current progress of parents. Comments from placing authorities are mainly positive regarding this aspect; however, one response highlighted occasional difficulties in the availability of relevant personnel to attend review meetings.

Whereby decisions and reports denote that recommendations are going to be made recommending the removal of the baby/child, these are sensitively relayed, with appropriate support plans being put into in place on behalf of the parents.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

The premises offers excellent levels of safety and security, which serves to protect the well-being of everyone accommodated. The main building, a listed property, is designed and furnished to provide excellent levels of private and communal accommodation. The service also offers accommodation, a short distance away from the main building, which permits the staff team to assess parenting skills from an appropriate, risk assessed distance. Hence, a flexible approach of assessment is offered to prospective placing authorities and families.

Kitchen and dining areas are suitably furnished and provide families with the space and equipment they need. Communal areas are spacious and furnished with good quality fixtures and fittings. Babies and children thrive in an environment which is safe, secure from public intrusion and equipped with toys and facilities which effectively promote their growth and development.

Outside areas are secure, parking spaces are clearly marked and the grounds have been extensively landscaped to provide safe play areas.



## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Written information about the service is clearly communicated through a website and Statement of Purpose. Those about to move into the service can be assured that the residents' guide provides the information they need. This, and all other documents, are provided in a variety of formats and are further explained verbally. Parents say they fully understand the importance of the assessment process.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Families are treated with respect and dignity, whilst receiving the support and guidance they need. There is a good gender mix of staff and care files demonstrate that the cultural, religious and pertinent additional needs deriving from disabilities, are fully explored and provided for. Staff display a non-judgemental attitude, which has an overwhelmingly positive effect upon the families.

The service provides excellent ongoing training opportunities, which enables the staff team to continue to improve and build upon already excellent levels of competence. Families thrive within an educative environment which provides them with the advice and support they need.

Staff benefit from excellent levels of supervision. Such sessions are delivered by managers with the necessary skills, and group sessions encourage reflective practice. Meetings are supportive and also highlight any development needs of the individual, in order that these can be supported, for example, through additional training.

Ongoing monitoring and quality assurance processes are effective. The service remains under its own close scrutiny and continually looks for ways to improve and develop further. The senior management team responds carefully to the changing needs of such services, as is demonstrated through a recent review of the referral process and the creation of new management posts.

## 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 relevant personnel are available for review meetings (National Minimum Standard 3)
- ensure the updated fire risk assessment and evacuation plan is completed and implemented within one month. (National Minimum Standard 22.4)