

Care 2 Share

Inspection report for residential family centre

Unique reference number	SC067331
Inspection date	14/06/2012
Inspector	Caroline Wilson
Type of inspection	Social Care Inspection

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Date of last inspection	31/05/2007

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This residential family centre is owned by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six families.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements
Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements
Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This is a highly effective service whose support is highly personalised to meet the individual needs of parents and children. Children and vulnerable adults' needs and views are prioritised in order to promote and safeguard their welfare. Staff take an honest and transparent approach to their assessments. The expectations of parents are clearly set out and parents have a good understanding of the scope of their assessment. Reports into parents' and children's progress are well written and provide an excellent insight into their parenting capacities and their ability to prioritise the needs of their children. The centre is well connected to local resources, which provide support to parents and enable them to challenge barriers that may be affecting their ability to parent.

The management structure is strong. They are supported by a highly skilled and competent staff team, who are focused on putting the needs of children first, working in conjunction with relevant practice guidelines and legislative frameworks. Managers routinely make good use of rigorous monitoring activities relating to the quality of care provided and improving services for parents and children. Managers are ambitious and energetic for continuous improvement.

Improvements since the last inspection

No statutory requirements or recommendations were set at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Parents and children have excellent opportunities to be involved within the local community. The centre has links with local organisations such as Sure Start, domestic violence, sexual abuse survivors and drug and alcohol prevention organisations. Parents and children have immediate access to these organisations in order that they can develop their parenting capability and knowledge, in matters such as child development, safe caring of their children as well as addressing any issues that form barriers that may be affecting their ability to parent to a 'good enough' standard. There is sound communication between these organisations. Parents' contact with these agencies is confidential, with the understanding that any safeguarding concerns relating to the safety of children or vulnerable adults will be referred to ensure that they are protected from harm.

Parents and children's good health is promoted. All parents and children have health care plans in place which enable their full health needs to be met. All necessary services are in place to respond to their needs, including their registration with primary health care services, such as General Practitioners, opticians and dentists within the locality. The centre has a strong relationship with the local health visiting service which enables children's health and development to be consistently monitored. This helps to ensure that children are developing age appropriately. Where there are any concerns with regards to a child's development, this can be quickly assessed as being organic or attributed to the care that they are being given, and remedial action taken. There is excellent communication between the centre and health visitors. Case discussions, in accordance with confidentiality policies, with regards to children's progress are held regularly so that their welfare is promoted. Comprehensive arrangements are in place with regards to the management, storage and administration of medication, including controlled medication. Parents understand their responsibilities to administer medication to themselves or their children as prescribed. This is monitored and recorded by staff to ensure that it is administered safely in line with agreed and medically approved protocols.

Staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to meet the health needs of families and their children. All staff are qualified to administer first aid and minor illness treatment and can provide advice and support in relation to this. Parents are involved in enabling staff to support their child's health needs and all have provided permission for staff to administer first aid and non-prescription treatment. Parents can attend first aid and food hygiene courses alongside staff so that they can learn skills which are beneficial for themselves and their children in these areas. Some staff are qualified in nursing and midwifery and can meet families specific needs with regards to related illness or complex needs.

Parents are supported to learn or build on their knowledge of offering their child a varied, regular and balanced diet. Parents who have children of mixed origin can learn how to cook meals in line with their child's cultural, racial, faith-based or ethnic requirements, so that they can meet their child's diverse needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Parents and children are and feel safe within the home. Staff place a strong emphasis on making positive relationships with parents and children. This generates a culture of openness and trust that ensures that staff are aware of and alert to any signs that might indicate that a child or vulnerable adult is in any way at risk of harm. Staff have excellent knowledge of the procedures that they should follow in the event of any allegation or disclosure. This includes a prompt referral to the Registered Manager and the need to liaise with any local authority making safeguarding enquiries. This ensures that measures are in place so that appropriate action can be taken to protect the child or vulnerable adult. Staff support parents to understand how to protect themselves and their children. This includes the monitoring of visitors to the centre and seeking injunctions against the threat of violence. Staff are astute to where a child's welfare may be at risk. Professionals state that the centre is child focused and takes swift action to convene a meeting and where necessary terminate a placement in order to protect a child.

The centre has managed a number of families where there have been high levels of challenging behaviour and has been successful in containing this so that everyone within the home is safe. All staff are trained in de-escalating procedures. Risk assessments which set out predictive strategies are in place to avoid the use of physical intervention. Parents are given the time to calm down and children are safeguarded within this process. Parents are provided with anger management strategies in follow-up and planned key-work sessions where appropriate. Physical intervention techniques are rarely used and only in instances to protect the person, others and damage to property.

The scope of the assessment is clearly set out so that parents know what the expectations are and how the assessment will be undertaken. Electronic surveillance is in place. Parents feel that it is a non-intrusive way of being assessed as they do not feel like they are being watched, although they are aware of its presence. Electronic surveillance is used as a robust method of providing evidence to support the assessment as well as being used to safeguard the welfare of children. The electronic surveillance also offers parents a level of privacy. It is not operational in private areas such as the bathroom and is turned off at night time, unless otherwise set out in parents' care plans.

Visitors are robustly monitored. Their visits are time-limited so as not to disrupt the assessment process. There are photos of staff and visitors so that parents are aware of who should be allowed in the unit. Visitors are not allowed unauthorised access to the home and have to sign in and out to confirm their identity. Visitors to the centre have to be sanctioned by the local authority and provide a day's notice before visiting, in order that background checks can be undertaken to ensure that they are of good character.

Parents and children's complaints are taken seriously. Complaints are investigated well within timescales and parents formally informed of the outcome and the option of progressing to the next stage if unhappy. Investigations undertaken are objective, and where appropriate remedial action is taken.

Recruitments systems are robust and ensure that only staff who are carefully vetted can work with parents and children. The centre meets all statutory requirements in respect of the safe recruitment of staff as well as undertaking extra safeguards, such as requesting three references instead of two. Full and satisfactory information is available in order that the centre can make informed decisions with regards to the integrity of staff working with children and vulnerable adults.

All health and safety inspections are undertaken at appropriate intervals. This keeps the environment physically safe and secure and takes into account the needs and characteristics of the parents and children being assessed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The centre only provides a service for parents and children who meet their admission criteria. This ensures that they are able to fully meet their needs. The centre has developed expertise in working with parents with learning disabilities. Professionals from this field commented the centre offers a 'fantastic' service in this respect, taking time to explain to parents the scope of the work that they are undertaking and the progress that they are making. One professional stated: 'I really value the service; the centre is really honest and upfront.' In their work with families with learning disabilities, professionals have commended the staff, stating that, 'they showed a very good understanding of the issues faced by people with learning disabilities.' Relevant risk assessments are in place; these are regularly updated to ensure that staff are aware of what action they should take where there is unacceptable behaviour. This promotes the welfare of all children, parents and staff.

Professionals state that reports written are of a high standard. One said that the centre's assessments produced were, 'exceptionally excellent'. The centre's reports are analytical, well written, objective and have proved invaluable in making decisions with regards to parenting capacity. Reports are balanced and highlight the strengths and weaknesses of families. Professionals have been impressed that the service has robust evidence of their assessment and provide a detailed analysis of their conclusions. Diversity is taken in account and given full consideration during the assessment process and when analysing parenting skills and styles. The centre does not just take into account Eurocentric approaches to parenting.

Parents and children receive a contract setting out the parameters of the assessment and a Statement of Purpose, so that they know the scope of the assessment being undertaken and the behaviours that are expected of them. Where placements are planned, parents and visitors can meet the staff and visit the centre so that they can be familiar with the centre, its ethos and the daily routine at the home. Initial meetings are also beneficial in assessing whether families' needs can be met, especially where referral information about the family is ambiguous.

Parents and children can express their views that affect their daily life and their future. These are undertaken through key-work sessions, house meetings and the opportunity to challenge information that is written about them, particularly where they are in disagreement. Key-work sessions enable families to address and identify personal areas of concern, where they are doing well, as well as matters in respect of their parenting. Key-work sessions are highly effective in addressing matters such as domestic violence, drug misuse, child development and learning budgeting skills.

Parents enjoy sound relationships with staff which are based on honesty and mutual respect. The centre is honest and upfront with regards to the progress that parents are making. Daily meetings are held which keep parents informed and party to decisions that are made. Reports are written at two and 12 weeks and at the end of the placement, so no information given is a surprise to parents.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Parents and children, subject to relevant risk assessments, participate in leisure activities in the local and wider community in a group and individual basis. This enables them to positively engage in constructive activities with their children to build their understanding of the world around them. It also enables parents and children to develop positive social skills when interacting in a group. All activities are photographed and given to parents as a memento of their time at the centre. These are valuable records of their progress and time with their children, irrespective of the outcome of their assessment. Good outcomes are celebrated and parties are held when parents and their children leave the centre.

Parents learn essential skills that will enable them to promote their economic wellbeing as life-long skills. Parents are supported by an external organisation to learn good budgeting and other financial skills to enable a successful transition when they return into the community. Parents are also supported to obtain gainful employment so that they can provide themselves and their children with financial security and a routine following their time at the centre.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

This is a highly effectively staff team lead by a knowledgeable and supportive management team. The Registered Manager is well qualified and experienced and exercises effective leadership of the home. This ensures that the home is organised, managed and staffed to a high quality and provides excellent quality of care that meets the needs of parents and children. Professionals have commended the Registered Manager on her exceptional oversight, and her ability to quickly see emerging themes and patterns within families. These are effectively communicated to local authorities in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Management arrangements are consistent when the Registered Manager is away from the unit. One professional noted that the deputy was very capable in the manager's absence and that staff are very competent in carrying out their responsibilities.

The registered individual has an excellent understanding of the field of family assessments. She is highly knowledgeable about the emerging trends of the service and has put developments in place to ensure that the centre is viable for the continuation of the home's current operation. Professionals state that the service is flexible in their approach to the service that they offer and the quality of the service is such that they look forward to using them again and that they were one of the top choices of residential family centres that they commission.

The centre has exceptional oversight into the service that they offer. Quality assurance is a high priority. There are daily, weekly and monthly monitoring systems in place which are effective in controlling how the centre is run, the service that it provides and its care practice. It also ensures that all staff consistently follows the home's policies and procedures and immediate action is taken to deal with any issues that arise in order to promote and safeguard the welfare of parents and children. The centre regularly gathers feedback from stakeholders, such as parents, children, social workers and placement officers in addition to Regulation 25 monitoring visits. One parent stated that they, 'would recommend the service to other families'. Another stated, 'you just need to ask staff and they will help you.'

Supervision of staff is undertaken on an individual and group basis. Supervision and team meetings take place every two weeks on an alternate basis. Both these forums allow for case discussion, practice discussions and training matters, which actively enhances staff practice and ensures that staff are highly skilled to assess parents and children. Supervision ensures that any individual matters are discussed so that staff continue to be aware of their roles and responsibilities.

The centre invests in its staff and is committed to providing them with regular and good quality training. This includes mandatory training such as safeguarding, first aid, but also on matters relevant to the service or an individual family. This ensures that staff are highly trained to enhance their individual skills. Staff have a high degree of knowledge, skills and are experienced to competently meet parents and

children's needs and keep themselves up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The staff group are reflective of the service users' diverse backgrounds so they have an excellent understanding, and full attention is given to the individual backgrounds of parents and children. Equal opportunities are central and integral to every aspect of their daily life and provide parents and children with the support that they need to feel pride in their identity and heritage. The centre celebrates all religious festivals and parents are encouraged to maintain their traditions, including prayers and religious observation. Equality and diversity issues are discussed during residents' meetings to ensure that there is a culture of mutual respect and tolerance. Parents and children have access to external services and support so that staff can fully understand the full range of parents and children's needs and respond to them in the most appropriate way in the community where they do not have that area of expertise.

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 for children. 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.