

Richmond House

Inspection report for residential family centre

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Inspector	Tina Maddison
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Responsible individual	Gary Dawkins
Date of last inspection	N/A

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Service information

Brief description of the service

Richmond House is a residential family centre registered to undertake parenting assessments for up to six families at any one time. Families are referred for assessment to the centre by the courts or local authority children's services. Following a period of assessment, agreed at the point of admission, an evidence-based report is produced which will decide whether it is in the child's best interest to remain in the permanent care of their parent(s) or carers. Richmond House is situated in a rural location and is in easy travelling distance of a large town and all of its healthcare, education and leisure facilities.

The overall experiences of children and parents

The overall experiences of children and parents are **Good**.

The manager ensures that unless there are exceptional circumstances, only carefully planned admissions of families take place, so that they fully understand why they are placed at the service, how and where the assessment and parenting support will take place and who will be undertaking the assessment. Placements are appropriately ended when it is clearly evidenced by staff that the assessment is not viable, or there are concerns about the safety of a child.

The manager and staff succeed in helping families understand the content of their assessment and what to expect. Parents value that staff are honest and straightforward when conducting the assessment and providing feedback. Staff always ensure that families understand, in a timely manner, any ongoing concerns regarding their parenting skills and capacity to keep their child safe. Staff praise, support and encourage parents to succeed and gain new parenting skills whenever possible. This is achieved through one-to-one sessions, group work and support to attend community facilities and sessions. The information that parents receive prior to arriving at the home doesn't contain photographs of the house, staff or facilities to aid parents' understanding of where they will be undertaking the assessment.

Parents report that they feel safe and well supported. Relationships between parents and the staff are positive, trusting and relaxed. One parent said 'I have learned so much from being here; I understand they are trying to help me. I really like the staff, except when they remind me of my mother!' Staff ensure that rules and boundaries are adhered to and that there is a mutual respect between parents, and between parents and staff. Any disagreements are quickly and fairly resolved by staff.

Parents and children live in a well-furnished and comfortable house that offers them all of the facilities and equipment they need. For example, there are lots of toys and

play equipment and a very well-equipped kitchen and laundry. Workshops and support sessions take place mostly at the house, with the opportunity to attend sessions in the community. A popular session with parents in the community is baby massage and workshops in the house with staff supporting parents to learn games and songs with their children.

Parents know how to make a complaint and they comment that staff listen to their views. There is not a formal system for collating these views to evidence how they contribute to the development of resources and practice.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that parents are encouraged to communicate their views, wishes and feelings on all aspects of their placement, assessment and support. (NMS 8.6)
- Ensure that the residents' guide to the residential family centre includes pictures and full information so that families are fully informed about their proposed assessment and the facilities the residential family centre offers. (NMS 2.1)

Quality of assessment

The quality of assessment is **Good**.

The manager and staff succeed in providing effective, comprehensive, well-evidenced assessments which are analytical and give a clear understanding of a family's history. Assessments are led by qualified social workers. All assessments are conducted in line with the placing authority's requirements and instructions and are targeted and focused. Progress is monitored through the use of smart targets, based on a theoretical framework triangle looking at child development, parental capacity and environmental factors.

The manager and staff effectively liaise with other professionals, working with parents prior to admission and during the assessment. One social worker said 'the service had very good feedback from the court regarding their assessment, particularly in terms of giving good and fair analysis'.

Assessments give a clear conclusion of the outcome of the assessment and parental capacity to change. Also, what further support may be necessary and recommended next steps; for example, whether any further assessment of parents is needed in a community setting.

The service has CCTV throughout the house. The use of these systems is clearly explained to parents and they sign an agreement to state that they fully understand that surveillance is used and where it is placed.

Parents are actively engaged to fully understand the assessment process. Staff receive training regarding how best to support parents with a learning disability or mental health issues. Staff deliver to parents the contents of final assessment reports sensitively and honestly and ensure that they fully understand all of the implications of the assessment outcome.

Leaders and managers continually evaluate the quality of the service's assessment and adapt it accordingly. For example, as a result of learning, improved visual tools and illustrative guides for parents with a learning disability are now used during an assessment if appropriate.

How well children and parents are protected and helped

The service is **good** at how well children and parents are protected and helped.

Parents spoken with during the inspection said that they felt very safe living at the family centre. Parents know how to complain and said that staff always act on any concerns they have and put things right. For example, during the inspection a parent commented that the front door banged each time someone came in and as it was near his room, this woke his baby. This was rectified immediately, through soft door

closers being installed.

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is a priority in the home. The manager and staff ensure that comprehensive risk assessments are completed prior to a family being admitted and are continually updated as risks reduce or increase. Parents receive a high level of supervision on admission to the service, which is gradually reduced if staff assess that parents are making progress with safe parenting skills. Such decisions are made in full consultation with the child's social worker.

The manager and staff are sensitive in understanding the pressures and tensions among families undergoing assessment. Parents said 'we all get on well most of the time, but if there is an argument staff deal with it very quickly'. Parents benefit from being assessed in a calm, relaxed and knowledgeable setting where there are clear rules and boundaries.

Staff are knowledgeable about the service's safeguarding policies and procedures, which are in line with the local safeguarding children's board's guidance. The manager offers a high level of support and advice to staff. This is a close staff team, who support each other, but would not hesitate to confront or whistleblow if safeguarding procedures and practices were not followed by other staff members.

Parents are effectively supported to gain skills in keeping their child safe. For example, parents ask staff if milk in a baby's bottle is at the correct temperature before giving it to the baby, but are encouraged by staff to say if they think it is or not, before staff give their view. This approach encourages parents' learning and confidence.

Staff recruitment is thorough and robust and ensures that only suitable persons are employed at the service. Staff receive training in child protection, safeguarding and topics such as child sexual exploitation and first aid.

Health and safety is very well managed at the service and all parents spoken with had taken part in a fire drill and knew what to do to keep themselves and their child safe in the event of a fire. Comprehensive risk assessments identify possible risks and how these will be managed through the documenting of control measures. All areas of the home used by families are child-friendly and safety is a priority. All stairs, for example, have child gates and outside areas are securely fenced.

Working with partners to improve outcomes

The service is **Good** at working with partners to improve outcomes.

A strength of the service is how the manager and staff effectively and collaboratively work with other professionals and services to ensure the best outcomes for the families placed with them. Strong working relationships are established between placing social workers, solicitors, Cafcass workers, health visitors and local

community services to ensure that families receive all the support and advice they need during their assessment and in planning the next steps.

A guardian said, 'I am impressed with the manager and staff. They have a straightforward approach to assessment, and they are approachable, kind and caring, especially when the families are very vulnerable. The manager is very accessible and readily shares appropriate information.'

Staff intervene appropriately if there are concerns regarding the safety of a child but allow parents to take carefully managed risks so that they are able to learn. They do this, for example, by gradually reducing the close supervision of parents at all times as they learn parenting skills and demonstrate that they are able to keep their child safe.

The service has strong working relationships with community health professionals. Medication is safely stored and administered. Staff work well with health professionals if any children or babies have complex medical needs. These are detailed in care plans, which document any specialist healthcare needs, how these will be met and by whom.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is **Good**.

The manager effectively supports and leads a motivated and committed team of staff who are well trained and supervised. The manager has been in post for four years and is an experienced and qualified social worker who has recently completed a level 5 management qualification.

This is a listening and learning service that continually strives to improve. The manager has produced a comprehensive development plan that details how the service intends to develop and improve over the next 12 months. Parents report that they feel listened to and requests are actioned by staff. However, information gained from complaints and comments from parents are not yet collated and do not inform the development plan.

There is evident positive morale among the team members, who support each other to undertake the high-quality assessments that the service provides. The manager has an open door policy and is well regarded by the staff team. Staff report that they are regularly supervised and very well supported. A recent move to the new premises has been well managed, ensuring that there was minimal disruption to families undergoing their assessment. Admissions to the service since the move have gone smoothly.

Leaders and managers, as documented in the service's statement of purpose, are clear that they will only undertake assessments when it is in the best interest of children and parents and any risks are known and are able to be safely managed.

Parents and children already undergoing assessments are taken into careful consideration and the impact of any new admissions are taken in to account.

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 and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of residential family centres.