

Orchard House Greenway Road

Orchard House Family Assessment Centre Limited

184 Greenway Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 6LH

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential family centre

Orchard House is a privately owned residential family centre. It is registered to accommodate up to five families who are referred for assessment to the centre by the courts or local authority children's services. It is situated close to town and within easy access to amenities.

The centre provides evidence-based parenting assessments and works with parents who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, physical and/or mental health conditions, personality disorders and/or drug and/or alcohol addiction.

Orchard House provides a range of additional specialist assessments and interventions if required.

Inspection dates: 11 to 12 March 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and parents, taking into account	Outstanding
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How well children and parents are helped and protected	Good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
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The residential family centre provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the residential family centre contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and parents.

Date of previous inspection: 3 February 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This residential family centre is outstanding because:

- Children and parents receive excellent support, supervision and assessment. Children's safety and best interests are at the forefront of all work carried out. Staff are skilled in managing situations of risk, and child protection issues are dealt with appropriately.
- The registered individual and registered manager are highly skilled, committed and professional leaders who work closely together to run an impressive service. The centre has recently not been run to capacity so that staff and resources meet children's needs.
- Individual placement plans are concise and effective, resulting in delays rarely occurring and no re-commissioned assessments due to poor quality work. Assessments are ended early where appropriate.
- Children and parents are supported with move-on plans, whatever the recommendation for the child at the end of the assessment.
- The quality of assessments is outstanding. The highly skilled staff team is experienced and well supervised. Assessments are designed to achieve the best outcomes for children. A variety of different assessment and intervention models are used, depending on the child's and parent's need.
- Parents receive honest and clear feedback about strengths and areas for improvement. The feedback is imparted sensitively and in a timely manner, giving parents every opportunity to act on the constructive advice given.
- Staff listen to what parents say and make changes where appropriate.
- The family centre is homely and welcoming. It is well maintained with toys for children to play with and furnished with the necessary facilities. This helps families to live side-by-side without impacting on each other's experience negatively.
- Managers and staff have effective working relationships with professionals and challenge where appropriate when concerns or issues arise for children.
- The team is re-evaluating its processes, procedures and risk assessments so that assessments are as realistic as possible, particularly given the distance some families are from their home.
- Good recruitment processes are in place to ensure that staff are suitable and safe to work with children. The fire, health and safety arrangements sampled are effective.
- Management monitoring and analysis reports are more focused on good assessment indicators and outcomes for children. Managers have started to track children's outcomes after they have left the centre, to understand the effectiveness of their work in the longer term.

The residential family centre's areas for development:

- A recommendation made at the previous inspection remains. Parents are not generally given the opportunity to demonstrate that they can take responsibility for their own medication rather than it being kept in the office.
- While supervision arrangements are individualised for families, some aspects of CCTV surveillance are intrusive to parents. Leaders and managers recognise this. They plan to have continued and more concrete discussions with parents and other stakeholders about ways to keep children safe while maintaining privacy and family life. This is in addition to exploring new surveillance systems.
- Staff receive a variety of training to equip them with the skills to do their job. There is scope to expand on specific training for adults and children who have diagnoses, for example autistic spectrum disorder, and so a recommendation is made accordingly.
- Wi-fi connectivity is problematic for residents and impacts on their daily life, causing frustration. Managers are doing what they can to resolve this.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure parents who are old enough and able to do so, can keep and take their own medication, unless the family placement plan stipulates otherwise. (National Minimum Standard 6.7)

- Ensure the use of surveillance does not intrude unnecessarily on the privacy of parents and children. (National Minimum Standard 10)

In particular, continue to investigate and evaluate how surveillance is used and reviewed to keep children safe and maintain privacy where possible, through discussions with stakeholders and CCTV providers.

- Staff are equipped with the skills and experience required to meet the needs of the parents and their children and the purpose of the centre. (National Minimum Standard 16.1)

In particular, expand on training for staff for children and parents who have specific diagnoses, such as autistic spectrum disorder.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and parents: outstanding

Children and parents receive excellent support, supervision and assessment at this residential family centre. They are helped to feel welcomed and respected. At the very start of the assessment, during the placement planning meeting, staff ensure that parents understand why they need to be at the centre. The questions that local authorities and courts need answering in relation to parenting ability are clarified to avoid any confusion. This ensures that the needs of the child remain central to all the work that is carried out at the centre.

Individualised placement planning meetings are completed no later than the first day that families arrive. The plans are concise and effective. Due to this thorough preparation and planning, assessments rarely go over timescale and exit planning is considered from the start. Managers regularly review the placement plan template, in line with feedback and legislative changes, so that it captures the necessary information.

Assessments are designed to achieve the best outcomes for children. Decisions are made on an individual basis as to how the assessment process is carried out, and sessions are tailor-made for families. A variety of different research-based assessment models are used, depending on the needs of children and parents. Throughout the process, parents receive honest and clear feedback about strengths and areas for improvement. The feedback is imparted sensitively and in a timely manner, giving parents every opportunity to act on the constructive advice given. Although the take-up is not as high as they would like it to be, staff encourage families to use community resources, in addition to those activities organised by the centre.

The quality of assessments is outstanding. The lead social worker arrives at clear conclusions and recommendations, which assist decision-makers in making effective plans and securing timely permanency for children.

At the end of the assessment, whatever the recommendation for the child, staff help children and parents with move-on plans. This support helps families with the next stage of their lives.

Managers have improved processes to capture parents' views about the centre. They now gather feedback at the beginning of parents' stays, as well as the middle and the end. Staff listen to what parents have to say. Concerns are identified at early points, enabling staff to act on these and improve children's and parents' experiences. For example, managers have improved the centre's website with an additional section for parents, as parents said that they often did not get information prior to arrival. An email link is now sent to solicitors and social workers beforehand, to increase the likelihood of parents being given information about the centre.

The presentation of the house is excellent. It is a home from home and has a welcoming, calm environment with plenty of play opportunities for children. Families do have to share communal facilities with one another, but this is managed well. The

facilities and layout of the building, alongside clear expectations about how people share, allow families to live alongside each other and have individual parenting experiences. The quality of such day-to-day experiences is crucial. If families are helped to feel comfortable under stressful circumstances, the outcome is a fairer and truer assessment.

Managers and staff have effective working relationships with other professionals and stakeholders. External professionals have confidence that fair, comprehensive and child-centred assessments will be carried out. They have commented on the exceptional quality of the intensive intervention provided. Social workers receive regular weekly feedback, more when necessary.

Wi-fi connectivity is problematic for residents. It impacts on their daily life, causing frustration. The centre has recently installed wi-fi and managers are liaising with providers as connectivity difficulties affect the street generally. The registered individual employs an IT expert who is attempting to address this issue and helps parents to connect with their devices.

How well children and parents are helped and protected: good

Safety for children is at the forefront of all work carried out, at any point in the assessment process. When managers complete viability assessments at the referral stage, less than 25% of referrals are accepted. These figures indicate careful decision-making. This child-centred approach continues during the assessment process. For example, if it is no longer safe for a child to remain at the centre, or if staff can answer the letter of instruction questions at an earlier stage, managers take the necessary action to end the assessment earlier than planned. This occurs in approximately half of all assessments. This action gives children protection, prevents delay in their planning and ultimately contributes to a more secure future.

Expectations of staff and parent actions and behaviours are clear and continually reviewed so that the centre is run safely. Staff identify and address concerns early on and intervene appropriately. Staff demonstrate a high level of skill, sensitivity and communication in knowing when and how to intervene in potentially harmful situations for children. Recording is focused, and so safeguarding issues are immediately apparent, ensuring that necessary follow-up takes place. The computer equipment that staff use is of good quality and enhances this precision.

The team has recently spent time looking at how assessments can depict as realistic a picture as possible, particularly given that some families are a long way from home. This is reflected in reviewed risk assessments that relate to parents taking their children out in the community and how time out is managed. This gives a greater indication of parenting capacity and choices that parents make when organising their days.

A recommendation made at the previous inspection remains. Parents are generally not given the opportunity to demonstrate that they can take responsibility for their own medication rather than it being kept in the office. Managers began to address this during the inspection as, when it is safe to do so, it gives further insight as to

how parents would manage living independently in the community.

While supervision arrangements are individualised for families, some aspects of CCTV surveillance are intrusive to parents. They also potentially inhibit a truer picture of understanding how families function and how parents keep children safe when they leave the centre. Leaders and managers recognise these issues and understand that surveillance is based on the exception principle. Leaders and managers plan to have continued and more concrete discussions with parents and other stakeholders about ways to keep children safe and maintain privacy and family life where possible. The registered individual has made appointments with CCTV providers so that they can invest in technology that will assist in these objectives being met.

Good recruitment processes are in place to ensure that staff are suitable and safe to work with children. The fire, health and safety arrangements sampled are effective.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered individual and registered manager are highly skilled, committed and professional leaders who work closely together to run an excellent service. They have high expectations about what children and parents can achieve but always with the 'child's best interests' Children Act principle at the heart of what they do.

Innovative research-informed practice has made an exceptional difference to children's lives. Staff are trained in a specific intervention model at a university which has borne out to be a favourite with parents. However, a variety of other social work and psychological methods are used. The relative proportion of children that go on to live with their parents is indicative of highly skilled interventions and assessment methods used. Additionally, families are not left in a position of having to be re-assessed due to inadequate assessments.

Leaders and managers challenge responses from other services when a need is identified and not met. Where appropriate and necessary, they will provide an additional service themselves. Despite this, effective working relationships exist with stakeholders, such as social workers, commissioners and the judiciary.

Management monitoring and analysis reports are more focused on good assessment indicators and outcomes for children. This has enabled managers to review what has worked and identify areas for improvement. An emphasis is now placed on tracking outcomes for children. Managers have started to follow children's journeys after they have left the centre, to understand the effectiveness of the centre's work in the longer term.

When incidents of concern occur, managers take these seriously and conduct learning reviews. Any staffing issues are dealt with during supervision. All complaints are examined and responded to in a timely manner. Appropriate action is taken where necessary. Responses to parent complaints are written with warmth and dealt with sensitively.

A higher staff turnover in the last year has led to managers initiating action to

address this. Exit interviews, anonymous staff surveys and development days contribute to an overall plan to increase staff stability. A review of the service has been completed in line with regulation which identifies strengths and weaknesses of the service. This is a comprehensive document and the management team is now working on a development plan to clarify priority points for action.

Conscious decisions have been made not to run the centre at capacity. The registered manager considers staffing and resource availability so that children get the best service that can be provided. Social workers have a well-calculated and manageable caseload which enables them to produce considered and thorough work. Team leaders, social workers and family support workers say that they feel supported and receive reflective supervision regularly. Staff receive a variety of training to equip them with the skills to do their job. There is scope to expand on specific training for adults and children who have diagnoses, for example autistic spectrum disorder, and so a recommendation is made accordingly.

The registered individual plans to raise the profile of residential family centres nationally, and has started to visit other centres to share information from a national practice forum and have discussions about specific issues for centres.

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: SC408039

Registered provider: Orchard House Family Assessment Centre Limited

Registered provider address: The Lodge, 60 Staplegrove Road, Taunton,
Somerset TA1 1DH

Responsible individual: Freda Gardner

Registered manager: Nancy Sullivan

Telephone number: 01823 324771

Email address:

Inspectors

Ms Sarah Canto, social care inspector
Michelle Oxley, social care inspector



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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
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