

Amber Lodge

Amber Family Ltd

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential family centre

This residential family centre provides care and accommodation for four families. The centre provides residential assessments that assist local authorities and courts in making decisions which promote the welfare of children.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 September 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and parents, taking into account	good
How well children and parents are helped and protected	good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good

The residential family centre provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 16 August 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

A monitoring visit took place 19 November 2019 in response to poor safeguarding practice following a serious incident at the residential family centre. Two compliance notices were issued under Regulations 8 and 12 of The Residential Family Centre Regulations 2002. A further monitoring visit took place on 18 December 2019. The compliance notices were deemed to have been met following this visit and no further enforcement action has been taken since this time.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and parents: good

On a day-to-day basis, families have positive experiences while they live in the centre. The environment is welcoming, calm and relaxed. Families present as being comfortable in the centre and at ease with staff. This supports them to make the best use of their time there, while they are being assessed.

Support is provided for parents to make good progress in respect of their parenting skills. Staff genuinely care and want the best outcomes for each family. Direct work and relevant education help parents to understand what their children need and what they need to do to be a good parent. Parents feel that they are making progress. They enjoy having access to activities such as baby massage and baby yoga.

Parenting assessments are of a good standard. Weekly summaries are produced. This helps parents understand their strengths and areas for development. It also helps them to understand and engage in the assessment process. Final assessments have clear outcomes and recommendations. These are in line with the findings throughout the assessment process.

Support and supervision in taking medication is provided where necessary. On one occasion, a parent was not supported in time to order repeat medication. This meant her health needs were not fully met. Errors in recording medication mean that medication administration records are unclear.

Internal placement plans do not fully capture the holistic needs of the family. Nor do they include relevant information from the placing authority, or the intended outcomes of the placement. A requirement is made to reflect this shortfall.

Parents do not always feel fully able to express themselves or their views. One parent reported she had additional learning needs. It was not clear how staff were ensuring that she understood the things communicated to her. Residents' meetings do not capture parents' views, wishes and feelings well. The quality of care review also does not embody parents' feedback. Strengthening these areas would ensure that parents felt listened to and knew that their views, wishes and feelings were important.

A number of requirements are made which come under the overall progress and experience area. However, this does not detract from the overall positive and beneficial experience parents have while living in the centre for assessment.

How well children and parents are helped and protected: good

Risks for parents and children are identified by the placing authority at the pre-placement stage. These risks then populate the centre's own risk assessments. Risk

assessments identify strategies for reducing and managing risks. The quality of the centre's risk assessments is good.

Risks identified at the point of placement are matched against the risks posed by the families already living there. More in-depth analysis of how risks may have an impact on each family would be beneficial. This would make clearer the matching and risk management process.

Most parents make good progress in relation to risk reduction. The centre uses a red, amber and green risk rating system called a 'heatmap'. This clearly illustrates the rate at which risks are reducing (or increasing, should this be the case).

There is a clear focus on safeguarding running throughout the centre's operation. Staff observe day-to-day parenting tasks to ensure these are performed safely. Training and education for parents around areas of risk such as co-sleeping, shaken baby syndrome and domestic violence have a positive impact. One parent specifically commented how one piece of work he had done had changed his understanding and behaviour.

Parents are encouraged to get along with each other and avoid conflict. Staff employ effective strategies to manage and diffuse any tensions that arise between families.

Safe recruitment practice is not always followed. Recruitment records are difficult to understand. Managers are not fully appraised of all recruitment checks prior to a member of staff starting to work in the centre. This does not ensure that all staff employed are safe and suitable to work with children and vulnerable adults.

The manager demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the families' individual risks. Her knowledge of the allegations process, however, was less well developed and requires some improvement. Other managers across the company are supporting the manager who is relatively new to the role.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There have been three managers at this centre since the last inspection. The current registered manager is not working here and has not yet cancelled her registration. An acting manager is in post who has yet to apply for registration. There are some shortfalls identified in the leadership and management of the centre. None of these are serious or widespread or have a significant effect on the experiences of the families who access the centre.

Systems for monitoring the quality of care are not fully embedded. For example, some documents had not been reviewed or scrutinised for errors, and families are not routinely consulted about their views about the running of the centre. Reports under regulation 25 have not been submitted to the regulator every month and visits have not always taken place. This hinders the regulator as well as the manager in monitoring the service.

Staff supervision does not always occur with sufficient frequency to evidence that staff are well supported. This is particularly true with staff who are new to the centre and who may only receive supervision every three months.

Local authority placement and care plans, looked after child reviews, placement planning meetings and the court letter of instruction are not held on file for any of the families. These are important documents which should guide the direct work and assessment of families.

More positively, those staff who were spoken to felt well supported. They said that staff morale was high and that they feel valued for the work they do. This helps to retain staff who are skilled and experienced. Staff have good development opportunities within the service and further learning and qualifications are supported and encouraged.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Residential Family Centre Regulations 2002 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person shall ensure that all persons employed by him receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 17 (5)(a))</p>	<p>19 October 2021</p>
<p>The registered person shall make arrangements for the recording, handling, safe keeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the residential family centre. (Regulation 11 (2))</p>	<p>19 October 2021</p>
<p>The registered person shall, before providing a family with accommodation in the residential family centre, or if that is not reasonably practicable, as soon as possible thereafter, draw up in consultation with the placing authority a written plan (in these Regulations referred to as "the placement plan") setting out, in particular—</p> <p>the facilities and services to be provided during the course of the placement;</p> <p>the objectives and intended outcome of the placement;</p> <p>an assessment of the risks, if any, which a resident at the residential family centre may present to their own health, safety and welfare or that of other residents or staff at the centre.</p> <p>In preparing or reviewing the placement plan the registered person shall, so far as practicable—</p> <p>seek and take account of the views of the members of the family;</p> <p>take account of any relevant assessment or other report relating to any member of the family which may be provided by the placing authority.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(c) (3(a))(b))</p>	<p>19 October 2021</p>

<p>The registered person shall not—</p> <p>employ a person to work at the residential family centre unless that person is fit to work at a residential family centre; or</p> <p>allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work at the residential family centre unless that person is fit to work at a residential family centre.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work at a residential family centre unless—</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to him in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2. (Regulation 16 (1)(a)(b) (3)(d))</p> <p>In particular, that no person should start work, shadow shifts or induction training in the centre until the organisation is in receipt of all relevant recruitment checks.</p>	<p>19 October 2021</p>
<p>Where the registered provider is an organisation or a partnership, the residential family centre shall be visited in accordance with this regulation by—</p> <p>the responsible individual or one of the partners, as the case may be;</p> <p>another of the directors or other persons responsible for the management of the organisation or partnership; or</p> <p>an employee of the organisation or partnership who is not directly concerned with the conduct of the residential family centre.</p> <p>Visits under paragraph (1) or (2) shall take place at least once a month and may be unannounced. (Regulation 25 (2)(a)(b)(c) (3))</p>	<p>19 October 2021</p>
<p>The registered person shall maintain in respect of each family accommodated in the residential family centre a record which—</p> <p>includes the information, documents and other records specified in Schedule 3 relating to members of the family. (Regulation 19 (1)(a))</p>	<p>19 October 2021</p>

<p>In particular, the records should include placing authority looked after children documents including care and placement plans, statutory meeting minutes, and the terms of any court order under which the family is provided with accommodation at the residential family centre.</p>	
<p>The registered person shall establish and maintain a system for—</p> <p>reviewing at appropriate intervals; and</p> <p>improving the quality of care provided at the residential family centre.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (1) shall provide for consultation with residents. (Regulation 23 (1)(a)(b) (3))</p>	<p>19 October 2021</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that placements take into account any disability or special needs. (Residential Family Centres National Minimum Standards, page 10, paragraph 3.1)

In particular, where parents express difficulties with communication, reading and writing a detailed plan is implemented to assist them and to ensure that they understand all communications and expectations.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and parents 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: 1239886

Registered provider: Amber Family Ltd

Registered provider address: K A Farr & Co Chartered Accountants, 6-8 Botanic Road, Southport, Lancashire PR9 7NG

Responsible individual: Carol Benbow

Registered manager: Nicola Miller

Telephone number: 01704 807170

Inspectors

Charlie Bamber, Social Care Inspector
Marie Cordingley, Social Care Inspector

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