

Crown House

Keys Family Assessment Centre Limited

10 Abbey Road, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 3HG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential family centre

A large national private company operates this residential family centre. It is registered to provide a service to eight families. Families usually stay at the centre for 12 weeks for their assessment. A range of assessment methods are used. The service can undertake community-based assessments if families are within travelling distance.

There is an interim manager in post who has submitted their application to be registered with Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 December 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 **good**

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

Date of previous inspection: 1 August 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and parents: good

Staff welcome families into the centre. The centre is very relaxed and has a calm atmosphere. Staff ensure that parents receive detailed information about the centre before they arrive. This information includes the expectations of the assessment process, so that parents understand how the assessment process works.

Parents describe their experience of the assessment process as 'fair'. They say that staff treat them with 'respect'. One parent said, 'It is important to me that I don't feel judged, and they do not judge.' Parents trust staff and feel able to confide in them. As a result, parents engage well with the assessment process. They are able to reflect on traumatic experiences with staff and staff help them to understand how these experiences can affect their parenting.

Staff use a holistic model of assessment to assess parents' skills. This enables them to identify where there are shortfalls in the parent's ability, as well as highlighting where there is a need for support. Reports are comprehensive, contain clear evidence and are analytical. This ensures that assessments meet the needs of children and their parents.

Parents with learning difficulties and disabilities receive excellent support. The use of accessible information is exceptional. Staff adapt their communication skills to meet the learning needs of parents. For example, parents are encouraged to design and prepare their own visual aids, such as charts for recording their children's basic care or routine activities. As a result, parents are able to communicate their understanding of their children's needs. This demonstrates staff's commitment to ensuring that the assessment process is fair and shows how they support parents with varying abilities to succeed.

The manager strives to avoid drift and delay in decision-making for children. Staff ensure that parents receive the support of advocates to give online evidence to court. As a result, professionals were able to make timely decisions about children's futures. This was despite the delays in the court process caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the end of the assessment process, parents receive excellent support. Staff go over and above to support families when they return to the community. For example, on occasions, staff will stay overnight in the family's local area. This helps families to experience a smooth and supported transition. In the event that children are unable to remain with their parents, staff help parents to write letters to alternative carers. These letters provide important information about children, such as their likes and dislikes. Staff carry out life-story work with children. They write and illustrate in a child-friendly manner and include children's work, in particular their experience of living at the centre. As a result, children grow up able to make

sense of their early lives, helping them to develop feelings of security and attachment.

The building requires some improvement to the decor. Work is also needed on some external areas. The centre also requires laundry services which are more accessible for families. The provider has already begun to act to address these concerns and there is a development plan in place.

How well children and parents are helped and protected: good

The manager and staff understand their safeguarding roles and responsibilities. Staff respond without delay to ensure that children are safe. They implement effective measures when there are concerns about children's safety. Management support is comprehensive, including out of hours. There is rarely a need to call the police.

Staff are curious and identify when parents need support. For example, staff recognised that one parent was displaying signs that they had self-harmed. Staff approached this with sensitivity. This led to the parent disclosing they were experiencing domestic abuse. As a result, staff were able to put in place measures to ensure that their child was safe. Staff also provided both parents with the necessary support.

Managers carry out risk assessments to ensure that parents' safeguarding abilities are 'tested'. They complete thorough safety plans for children, for example, for when families spend time out of the centre on their own. This helps to evidence the ability of parents to keep their children safe. However, decision-making is not always recorded clearly, but this does not affect the safety of children and their parents.

The majority of parents understand the centre's complaints process and feel able to approach staff if they have any concerns. The manager responds and investigates complaints thoroughly. They take any necessary action quickly. As a result, parents feel listened to and understood.

On occasion, the action staff take when there is friction between parents is not effective. For example, there had been ongoing friction between two parents throughout their assessment. This escalated to an incident where one parent alleged that they were physically assaulted. It was not clear what action staff had taken to prevent this incident from occurring. In addition, sessions led by staff to support one parent to regulate their feelings had not been effective. In response to the allegation, staff took swift action to ensure that all families were safe.

The centre has stringent recruitment processes. Managers involve parents in the staff recruitment process, for example by sitting on the recruitment panel. This helps parents to feel valued.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is passionate and committed. They have excellent oversight of parents' progress and they know families well. The manager is keen to develop the service. Plans are in place to improve psychological support for parents. This is because managers recognise the impact trauma can have on parenting capacity.

The centre has excellent relationships with stakeholders. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. One social worker said the service had been 'child-centred every step of the way'. These professional relationships promote careful planning and decision-making to ensure that children are safe.

The assessment process is well planned from the point of referral. There is excellent consultation between the manager, staff and parents. As a result, parents feel able to fully engage in the assessment process. They also feel able to challenge the views of staff. Parents receive regular feedback on the progress of their assessment. The manager also comments on parents' weekly progress reports. This assists the manager to evaluate the quality of assessments parents receive and contributes to validating parents' progress, thereby increasing their self-esteem.

The manager has good monitoring systems in place. They use an array of tools which help them to evaluate the service. They are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the service and have a plan to develop the service.

Families receive support from a strong and stable staff team. Staff have good assessment skills. They are creative in the way in which they engage parents, for example, using sensory aids to help parents regulate their feelings. As a result, parents are able to explore sensitive issues.

There are some shortfalls in the training provided to staff. Training relevant to the needs of some parents is out of date. Managers have provided staff with online training during the pandemic. However, this has not equipped staff with the necessary skills, in particular, to work with parents with specific psychological and physical health disorders.

Staff receive regular supervision which encourages them to reflect on their practice. This ensures that staff are accountable for their work with children and their parents.

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 the residential family centre is conducted so as to—</p> <p>promote and make proper provision for the health (including physical, mental, and emotional health) and welfare of residents. (Regulation 10 (1)(a))</p> <p>In particular, managers and staff must intervene in a timely and effective manner when there is friction between parents.</p>	14 February 2022
<p>The registered person shall ensure that all persons employed by him—</p> <p>receive appropriate training, supervision, and appraisal. (Regulation 17 (5)(a))</p> <p>In particular, the manager must ensure that all staff receive training relevant to the needs of parents.</p>	14 February 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the necessary improvements to the building as planned are undertaken in a timely manner. This includes the refurbishment of the bathrooms and recommended repairs to cracks in an external wall. Parents should be provided with adequate laundry services and storage for their belongings. ('Residential family centres NMS', 11.2)
- The registered person should ensure that records such as risk assessments clearly record the rationale for decision-making. Records should also be accurate in regard to the date of entry and which family the record is referring to. ('Residential family centres NMS', 20.5)

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: SC051886

Registered provider: Keys Family Assessment Centre Limited

Registered provider address: Maybrook House, Second Floor, Queensway,
Halesowen, West Midlands B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Amanda Pomell

Registered manager: Post vacant

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Inspector

Sarah Berry, Social Care Inspector

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