

Autumn House

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential family centre

This residential family centre is registered to provide support for up to three families at any one time. The centre is privately owned.

Families access the centre at the direction of the family court or the local authority for the purpose of assessment. Parenting assessments are usually completed over a 12-week period, but may be extended if agreed with the local authority or following court instruction.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2022.

There were two families living at the centre at the time of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 November 2022

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: 20 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and parents: good

Families are welcomed to the centre in a sensitive way. They are helped to understand expectations and how the assessment process works. One parent described how staff encouraged her to ask questions and share her concerns when she arrived.

Placement plans are highly personalised. Families receive well-planned support, which is tailored in accordance with their individual needs. The regular review of families' placement plans helps to support their ongoing progress.

Families benefit from structured and positive routines. Staff work closely with parents to help them to develop their skills and confidence. Families have positive experiences at the centre, and are encouraged to take part in a range of activities that are designed to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence.

Staff tend to manage people's medication. There is not always enough consideration as to how parents can be supported to develop their skills and confidence in this area. Furthermore, recent errors by staff mean that medication administration records are not consistently clear.

Parenting assessments are carried out by a qualified social worker. Families are encouraged to participate meaningfully, and staff take time to ensure that families are clear about the progress of their assessments. Assessments are of good quality, evidence based and include clear recommendations.

Families say that they feel able to express their views. Residents' meetings capture people's views, wishes and feelings well. However, information about actions taken in response to people's feedback is limited. Strengthening this area will help to ensure that parents are reassured that their views are heard and acted on.

How well children and parents are helped and protected: good

All staff receive training in safeguarding and have a good understanding of the action they should take if concerns are identified. Parents benefit from training and education in a range of areas that support children's safety, such as childhood illnesses and first aid.

Staff are vigilant and there are clear monitoring arrangements in place, which are individually assessed for each parent and regularly reviewed. This helps to ensure that there is a suitable balance between safety and people's privacy. It is recommended that the centre's CCTV policy is reviewed to ensure it supports developing practice.

Risks to people's safety and well-being are clearly identified. There are well-detailed risk management plans, which include clear guidance and strategies to support families safely. Good-quality direct work helps parents to develop their understanding of personal safety and supports them to make safer choices.

There are clear expectations and boundaries. Staff manage conflict and any challenging situations well. Relationships between families are closely monitored and action quickly taken if there are any concerns. This helps to maintain a safe and comfortable environment for families.

There are suitable procedures in place to ensure that all areas of the home are well maintained and free from hazards. Safer recruitment procedures are carefully followed. This helps to ensure that families are not exposed to staff who are of unsuitable character.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is a manager in post who registered with Ofsted in April 2022. The manager is a registered social worker who has extensive experience in social care. She demonstrates a strong vision for the service and a commitment to high standards of assessment, support and safety.

Good-quality professional relationships help to ensure that families benefit from well-planned, holistic support. The manager works closely with a range of external partners to ensure the best outcomes for parents and children.

Staff turnover is low. This means that families benefit from consistency and receive support from a stable staff team. There is a good range of skills across the staff team, which includes three social workers, staff with early years experience and staff qualified in working with children in residential services.

There is a well-detailed workforce development plan in place, which is regularly reviewed. A range of mandatory learning and training related to families' individual needs, supports the staff team's skills and knowledge.

There is a positive approach to supervision, and staff describe a culture of reflective practice. Effective arrangements are in place, including a programme for the professional supervision of social workers. Better use could be made of the supervision process when addressing performance issues, such as medication errors.

The manager makes effective use of internal monitoring, which enables her to identify and act on shortfalls. However, the overall evaluation of families' experiences and outcomes could be more effective to provide a clearer picture of the service's strengths and areas of practice that would benefit from development.

Reports submitted under regulation 25 vary in quality. They tend to describe parents' needs rather than evaluating the standard of assessment, support and safety.

Furthermore, consultation with external professionals is inconsistent. This does not support the regulator or the manager in monitoring the service.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that there is an effective policy on the safe management of medicines, which includes a written record of all medication, treatment and first aid given to parents and children during their placement. In particular, the policy should outline how parents should be supported to manage their own medication, where this is assessed as safe. (Residential Family Centres National Minimum Standards, page 12, paragraph 6.6)
- The registered person should ensure that parents are encouraged to communicate their views, wishes and feelings on all aspects of their placement, assessment and support and that staff take account of these views, wishes and feelings in the day-to-day running and development of the centre. (Residential Family Centres National Minimum Standards, page 9, paragraph 2.1)
- The registered person should ensure that there is a clear and effective policy on the use of surveillance in parenting assessments. The policy sets out how the techniques will be used to contribute to assessments, how families will be informed of their use for their circumstances, how legitimate privacy will be protected and how residents will be protected from potential abuse of such measures. In particular, the service's CCTV policy and procedures should be reviewed to ensure that these reflect developing practice. (Residential Family Centres National Minimum Standards, page 18, paragraph 10.1)
- The registered person should ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the centre. Parents and children, of an appropriate age, are regularly involved in contributing to monitoring the operation of the centre page 29. In particular, the outcomes and experiences of each family who use the centre should be meaningfully evaluated. (Residential Family Centres National Minimum Standards, page 29, paragraph 19.1)
- The registered person should ensure that visits of the centre carried out under regulation 25 include an assessment of the balance of privacy and supervision of families at the centre. (Residential Family Centres National Minimum Standards, page 29, paragraph 19.5)

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: 1256770

Registered provider: U5 Limited

Responsible individual: Diane Cain

Registered manager: Diane Kelly

Telephone number: 01512879064

Inspector

Mrs Marie Cordingley, Social Care Inspector

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