

# Orchard House Family Assessment Centre

Orchard House Family Assessment Centre Limited

Orchard House, Fons George, TAUNTON, Somerset TA1 3JS

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential family centre

This is a residential family centre for up to seven families, who are referred for assessment to the centre via the courts or local authority children's services. Families have their own bedrooms and they share communal areas, such as the kitchen and lounge. The organisation has invested in a separate building with offices and a well-equipped playroom so that families can attend assessment and specialist sessions away from their living environment.

The centre enables children to live safely with their family while care from their parent(s) or carers is assessed. The centre provides evidence-based assessments, which will enable informed decisions to be made about whether or not it would be in the child's best interests to remain in the permanent care of their parent(s) or carers. The centre's multi-disciplinary team liaises and works with local agencies and services to provide support to meet the identified needs of families.

At the time of the inspection, the centre's manager was not registered with Ofsted. However, their registration was confirmed on 15 November 2022.

Four families were living and being assessed at the centre at the time of the inspection.

### Inspection dates: 8 to 10 November 2022

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and parents,</b> 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 June 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and parents: good**

The quality of the individual support that the team provide to families is very good. Support plans are tailored to families' needs. Parents build trusting relationship with staff, helping them to accept feedback in a way that supports their progress. Family feedback is overwhelmingly positive. Families feel fully supported and consider that their assessments are fair. They feel listened to and report that they can confidently challenge the social work evidence if they do not agree with the content.

Families coming to the centre are given opportunities to talk with the team prior to their arrival. Staff provide them with information to help them understand what to expect during their stay. This reassures anxious families who are sometimes given limited information about their stay by local authority social workers. However, the welcome pack is rather large and some parents may find it difficult to take onboard all of the information.

Social workers provide excellent weekly feedback to families. This is focused and highlights the family's strengths and areas for development. Parents' views are routinely sought and considered as part of this process. Targeted actions are identified to ensure that parents know what areas need additional attention. This helps to keep assessments focused and specific to each family. Parents spoken with told an inspector that they found this very helpful as it highlighted what was expected of them.

Parents know how to complain and all complaints, whether minor or significant, are taken seriously by the team. These are used to improve the provision and ensure that it continues to offer a service that meets the needs of families.

Parents are supported to attended groups with their child and see the value in community resources. The centre provides a range of groups for families that build trust in community support and develop positive relationships with professionals. The centre also supports families to continue to access religious groups. This provided a great deal of support to one parent during their stay.

The centre's team provides a range of therapeutic interventions for parents. These are time-limited therapies that help to stabilise parents while transitioning to more extensive resources. The underpinning therapeutic nature of the centre is a strength and provides some parents with resources that they might otherwise not have access to.

The team supports families to meet their own health needs and those of their child. Families register with local GP surgeries and can access the advice and guidance of two health visitors who visit the additional resource hub that is linked to the centre. This gives families opportunities to seek parenting advice from familiar professionals.

## **How well children and parents are helped and protected: good**

The team keep children safe at the centre. Monitoring and surveillance systems are robust. The team continually assess the need for the use of direct observations and CCTV monitoring. There is good communication between each shift team to ensure that each member of staff knows the most up-to-date information about the families.

Planning documents provide sufficient information about the family's history that includes both strengths and concerns. The risks are clearly identified. However, there is no separate risk assessment plan completed by the centre to consider how risks will be managed in the home, including the risk to others.

Interim social worker reports are succinct and analytical. There is a range of focused support and intervention provided to the family. The strengths and risks are balanced to inform a strong analysis and appropriate recommendations. The risks are not minimised, and this enables accurate future planning.

Final reports detail progress, and the risks in the assessment are explicit. The parents' views about their assessments are included. During discussions with the inspectors, social workers were clear and confident about the outcome of the assessment. However, this is not always clearly defined in the report. In one instance, there was limited analysis of the parents' capacity to protect in order to inform care planning processes. This led to a delay in the court process and permanence for the child.

On the whole, reports contain evidence-based research to strengthen their assessment and recommendations. However, this is not always consistent.

Leaders and managers do challenge the local authority when future plans do not meet the needs of children. However, this is not consistently robust. When the team considers that a child is at risk of harm the centre acts swiftly to end placements. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been extensive delays to court proceedings. The centre has challenged this on some occasions but not on others. This has meant that families have continued to be assessed and monitored when other arrangements may be more appropriate.

The centre takes a balanced approach to drug and alcohol testing. Each family's history is considered alongside initial testing, when required. The need for testing is consistently reviewed to ensure that it is only used when required.

Staff effectively use de-escalation techniques to manage challenging behaviour. They are skilled in discussing concerns with families and treating them with respect and fairness. Parents respond well to this approach, and significant incidents are rare. The centre has an on-call system so that staff on shift can call for additional advice or assistance if they feel unable to manage a situation. This provides an additional layer of safety for children, parents and staff.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

Leaders and managers keep the centre well maintained. There is an on-site estate manager who responds swiftly to requests from parents and staff for repairs. When inspectors highlighted curtains that were stained, they were replaced overnight. There is a well-equipped kitchen and communal spaces that provide opportunities for families to spend time with their child or talk to other families.

The centre has a team of experienced and qualified social workers who complete family assessments. Their assessment processes are underpinned by skilled family support workers who complete direct work with families and compile detailed recordings of their parenting. They work well together to provide comprehensive and accurate information for assessments.

Staff feedback is overwhelmingly positive. Staff enjoy coming to work. They report that the team is cohesive and encouraging. They feel supported and valued by leaders and managers.

There has been a significant turnover of staff since the last inspection. This has not affected the quality of the assessments being completed. Action is being taken to address staff vacancies. However, at present, the centre cannot run to full capacity due to staff shortages. The centre has robust recruitment processes.

Managers have worked with the health visiting service and driven improvements to ensure that families receive consistent advice about how to care for their babies. This advice also underpins the information provided by family support workers and helps to avoid parents being confused by conflicting messages. This gives families confidence that assessments are fair.

There is evidence that there is a significant amount of case reflection occurring within the team, but this is not always formally recorded. Staff have access to regular supervision, and they report that this is helpful in supporting their practice and well-being. However, the recordings do not demonstrate the reflective nature of these discussions. Case discussions occur between the clinical psychologist and the social work team, but the external social work supervisor is not involved in these sessions and is not provided with a record. Social workers also told inspectors that they were having informal case discussions, but these are not recorded. This makes learning from lessons more challenging for leaders and managers as a coherent record of reflective discussions is not available for review.

All staff complete mandatory training and have access to a range of additional training that can support them to meet the needs of the families. However, during the inspection, not all staff were able to recall attending training that was relevant to safeguard particular families. For example, one family was vulnerable to county lines exploitation, but one member of staff working with them could not recall completing this training.

Leaders and managers develop positive relationships with other professionals. This helps families to receive a coordinated approach to their assessment. Professionals who inspectors spoke with reported that communication was excellent and the assessment of support required was helpful in creating an appropriate support plan.

## 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, before providing a family with accommodation in the residential family assessment centre, or if that is not reasonably practicable, as soon as possible thereafter; draw up in consultation with the placing authority a written plan setting out, in particular –</p> <p>a risk management plan to address all assessed risks, if any, which a resident at the residential family centre may present to their own health, safety and welfare or that of the other residents or staff at the centre. (Regulation 13 (1)(c))</p>	17 January 2023

### Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all final reports are evidence based, clearly expressed and maintain a clear focus on the child. It should outline the parents' strengths and weaknesses and any ongoing risks or safeguarding issues. (NMS 1.12)
- The registered person should ensure that plans are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are appropriate. When further assessment in the placement is not required, the registered person should robustly challenge the local authority to ensure that families do not continue to live at the centre when it no longer meets the child's needs. (NMS 9.6)
- The registered person should ensure that staff have access to support and advice and are provided with regular supervision. In particular, this should be useful in considering practice challenges and should be reviewed to improve practice. (NMS 17.4)

- Each centre has and implements a procedure for introducing families to the centre so that their move is managed with sensitivity and care. In particular, the welcome information should be accessible for all families. (NMS 7.1)

## **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:** SC066535

**Registered provider:** Orchard House Family Assessment Centre Limited

**Registered provider address:** The Lodge, 60 Staplegrove Road, TAUNTON,  
Somerset TA1 1DJ

**Responsible individual:** Freda Gardner

**Registered manager:** Jonathan Parish

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## **Inspectors**

Ms Penelope Kutz, Social Care Inspector  
Louise Bacon, Social Care Inspector

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