

Amber House

Amber Family Limited

43 Scarisbrick New Road, Southport, Lancashire, PR8 6PE

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential family centre

This residential family centre can accommodate up to four families at any one time.

The centre provides residential assessments that assist local authorities and courts in making decisions which promote the welfare of children.

The registered manager has been in post and registered since 10 June 2024.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 November 2024

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: 24 August 2021

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 warmly to the centre. Where possible, parents visit the centre and are provided with the resident's guide before they move in. When this is not possible, staff provide the required information to families at the first opportunity. Some families chose this centre after visiting others.

Staff and the assessing social worker ensure that families are well informed of the assessment process and the expectations on them throughout their time in the centre. Families understand what is working well and what they need to work on next. Staff give families regular opportunities to read and challenge anything that is written about them.

Assessments are evidence based and provide a detailed rationale for the recommendations. Most families stay for the entirety of their assessment. However, when they do not, there are clear reasons for this, and children's safety is prioritised.

Relationships between staff and families are positive. Staff and managers collate feedback from families about their time in the centre after they leave. Families feel staff are non-judgemental and helpful, and that staff have been pivotal in them learning new skills and making life changes. One parent said, 'they make you feel safe'.

The centre is spacious, well decorated, and well maintained. The space is designed to meet the need of the parents and children that live there. It has age-appropriate toys and equipment for young children, and private spaces where parents can meet involved professionals. Staff make adaptations to the centre to accommodate the needs of the families that live there, such as providing additional food storage to meet religious needs.

Staff hold regular meetings with parents to gain their views. Parents are confident raising issues with staff both within and outside of these meetings. Staff address any concerns promptly, such as making improvements to the outdoor pram storage. This enables families to feel valued and heard.

Staff create and provide children and their families with books of memories from their time in the centre. Managers and staff focus on ensuring that families have positive memories of their time, regardless of the outcome of the assessment. As a result, children have detailed information about their families and early development for later life.

How well children and parents are helped and protected: good

Staff have a good understanding of the risks and concerns for each family and how to support them. Risks to each family are identified prior to them coming to the centre, however the manager does not complete an assessment of how the family would fit with the others that already live there within this. A recommendation has been made in relation to this.

Safeguarding incidents in the centre are rare. However, when they occur, staff manage them appropriately and inform the relevant professionals. Staff are aware of the changing risks of families through the alerts within the IT system. Staff consider and discuss the changing risks for families within their weekly meeting. However, family-specific risk assessments are not included within the placement plans and therefore staff lack written strategies to follow. A requirement has been made in relation to this.

Staff support parents to learn about risks and work with them to reduce them throughout their time in the centre. Parents have access to appropriate courses that develop their parenting skills and knowledge, as well as the consistent support of staff. The support offered is effective, with risks reducing for most families that live at the centre.

Medication is stored safely in the centre and staff complete audits to ensure that there is the expected amount. On one occasion, the audit highlighted a discrepancy, but this was not reported to the registered person. The missing medication was later found, and the record amended, however this was also not reported to the registered person. The medication policy for the centre does not tell staff what they should do in these circumstances. A requirement has been made in relation to this.

Families do not go missing from the centre. However, should parents and children go missing, staff know how to respond.

Staff do not search the bedrooms of families. Staff make the expectations of parents clear to them. Staff monitor CCTV closely to ensure that the centre remains safe for children. This allows parents to maintain their privacy and dignity and maintains the relationship of trust between staff and parents.

Staff explain clearly to parents what to do in the event of emergency when they arrive at the centre. Consequently, all parents know what to do in an emergency.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has worked for the organisation for a significant period and became registered in their current role in June 2024. She knows the service well and has a robust network of support available to them from other managers in the organisation.

The registered manager is committed to providing a high-quality service to the families living in the home. Staff say they enjoy coming to work and say they love their jobs. Staff say they feel supported by leaders and manager and describe feeling valued by the organisation.

The staff team is largely stable. Staff stay and work for the organisation for many years. The senior leaders within the organisation review the staffing and skill needs of the centres for the provider and reallocate staff periodically. This allows experienced staff to support less experienced staff and good practice to be shared across the settings.

The manager provides staff with regular supervision. Appraisals are also undertaken in a timely way. Staff have regular opportunities to reflect on their practice and how to improve it. The manager and other senior leaders maintain a focus on staff development and ensure that staff have opportunities to improve their skills.

The responsible individual for the home is the author of the statement of purpose. The statement of purpose is regularly updated and provided to the regulator. However, the registered manager does not currently review and approve the statement of purpose. A recommendation has been made in relation to this.

Families rarely complain about the setting. On the one occasion a parent complained, the previous registered manager responded thoroughly and promptly. They met with the parent to discuss their concerns, investigated the issues, and considered where there might be learning to improve the service. The manager changed policy and ensured that all the families living in the centre were aware of this change.

The manager follows internal policy when recruiting staff. However, the dates of previous employment are not always clear, and the manager does not check the dates of employment when verbally verifying references. Therefore, there is potential for gaps in employment to be unexplored. A recommendation has been made in relation to this.

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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<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.</p> <p>(Regulation 11 (2))</p> <p>Specifically, that there is a clear process for staff to follow when there are discrepancies with family medication, and that this is reflected in the centre's policies.</p>	24 December 2024
<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>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>(Regulation 13 (1)(c))</p>	24 December 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should, prior to a placement, ensure that a risk assessment is carried out to ensure that the family is able to fit in with the centre's other residents. (Residential Family Centres National Minimum Standards, page 17, paragraph 9.1)
- The registered person should consistently follow good recruitment practice and ensure that gaps in employment are clear and explored. (Residential Family Centres National Minimum Standards, page 22, paragraph 14.2)

- The registered person should approve the statement of purpose. (Residential Family Centres National Minimum Standards, page 16, paragraph 8.3)

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: 2567620

Registered provider: Amber Family Limited

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

Responsible individual: Carol Benbow

Registered manager: Nicola Miller

Telephone number: 01704 807170

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Inspectors

Sarah Huntbatch, Social Care Inspector

Leanne Carr, Social Care Inspector

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