

Residential family centre inspection

Name	Amber Family Limited
Inspection date	16/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC477339
Registered provider	Amber Family Ltd
Registered provider address	K A Farr And Co Chartered Accountants, 6-8 Botanic Road, Southport PR9 7NG

Responsible individual	Carol Benbow
Registered manager	Gillian Whalley
Inspector	Ceri Evans Charlie Bamber

Inspection date	16/08/2016
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences of children and parents	Good
The residential family centre provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
The quality of assessment	Good
How well children and parents are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC477339

Summary of findings

The residential family centre is good because:

- The staff team's ability to build and sustain positive relationships with parents, children and external professionals is a key strength. Leaders and managers, along with staff, are committed to helping parents to make meaningful progress and to overcome barriers that have an impact on their ability to care, bond and keep children safe.
- Relationships within the centre are strong and are based on respect, openness and transparency. The atmosphere is relaxed and welcoming and relationships are mutually respectful. This enables parents to feel safe and secure throughout their assessment.
- Families benefit from tailored, high-quality support from a stable staff team. The team enables parents to learn a wide range of skills and provides them with opportunities to build their parenting, personal development and life skills. They are also able to attend an extensive range of groups relating to child development alongside other fun activities and family days out.
- The assessments of families are rigorous and provide very clear recommendations to court based on detailed evidence gathered over a 12-week period. The assessment is tailored to each family, with children's needs at the centre.
- The centre has comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures, which are fully implemented in practice by staff. The protection and safety of children and their parents is regularly discussed in supervision, handovers and meetings. As a result, staff are confident, skilful and demonstrate sound knowledge of child and adult protection.
- Leaders and the manager provide clear and inspirational leadership and demonstrate high expectations of themselves and of the staff team. Staff talk positively about working at the centre and say that they feel well supported.
- The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the centre and is keen to improve the service. However, there are some shortfalls that require attention. These are the quality of the family placement plan, risk assessments and monitoring systems. To date, these shortfalls have not had a detrimental impact on families.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person shall, before providing a family with accommodation in the residential family centre, or as soon as possible thereafter, draw up a written plan setting out an assessment of risk, which a resident may present to their own health, safety and welfare or that of other residents at the centre. This specifically relates to reviewing and updating risk assessments throughout the placement. (Regulation 13 (1)(c))	06/10/2016
The registered person shall establish and maintain a system for reviewing at appropriate intervals, and improving the quality of care provided at the residential family centre. (Regulation 23 (1)(a)(b))	06/10/2016
The registered person shall supply to the Commission a report in respect of any review conducted by him for the purposes of paragraphs (1), and make a copy of the report available to residents. (Regulation 23 (2))	06/10/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Parents and children's physical, emotional and social development needs are identified in their family placement plan and promoted throughout their placement (national minimum standards (NMS), 6.1).
- Prior to placement, a risk assessment is carried out to ensure both that the centre is well placed to meet the family's needs and that the family is able to fit in with the centre's other residents (NMS, 9.1).
- The registered person has a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the centre, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the centre's current operation and resource. The views of parents and children at the centre at the time of the annual review are sought and taken into account (NMS, 13.2).

Full report

Information about this residential family centre

This is the centre's first inspection since its registration.

The centre can accommodate a maximum of four families. Each family has its own bedrooms and three of the rooms have en-suite facilities. The centre also has a communal bathroom, a large lounge area, a kitchen, a laundry, a dining room and a visitors' lounge, which is made available for family contact and other meetings. The centre has an enclosed garden and a private car park.

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

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences of children and parents	Good
<p>The existence of positive relationships is a key strength at this centre. The staff team is clearly able to build and sustain positive relationships with parents, children and external professionals. Staff are committed to helping parents to make meaningful progress and overcome barriers that have an impact on their ability to care, bond and keep children safe. This was confirmed by a parent who said, 'Staff are really supportive and we settled in really easily. Staff are good and they don't judge you for what is in your past and help you to move forward. This place is the best thing that social services could have done for us. Because of the assessment, my baby will be staying with me.'</p> <p>The living accommodation and environment is very welcoming and relaxed. One parent commented, 'I like it here, I've got everything I need and it's a really happy place to be.' Families have their own space, all furnished to a good standard. There are several communal areas for families to spend time with their children or with other families. Parents were observed during the inspection sitting and chatting together along with staff in a relaxed and calm atmosphere.</p> <p>The service has received no complaints since its registration with Ofsted. There are clear policies and procedures in place that address making complaints. These are highlighted in the statement of purpose and parents' guide. Families spoken with during the inspection confirm that they have very good opportunities to share their views and opinions about the centre. They are confident that staff would take immediate action to remedy concerns. This further demonstrates that families feel supported during what is a challenging time for them.</p> <p>Admissions are well managed. Parents confirm that they appreciate the opportunity to visit the centre and are given a great deal of information prior to admission. Departures are equally well managed. A number of ex-residents keep in contact with the centre and will often pop in for a cup of tea and attend the occasional group outing. An ex-resident confirmed this during the inspection and said, 'We still come and visit all the time, this is the only place I have come back to. I have been in lots of care homes before this. But staff here have had so much confidence in us. Without them encouraging us we would not be here. I have got a lot of faith and trust here. It is still one of my main support networks. I'd give this place 11 out of 10, it's brilliant.'</p> <p>The centre has a placement plan for each family. These outline aims and objectives for the placement. Parents contribute to the development of their placement plans, which helps them to identify what they would like to achieve. However, there are shortfalls. Currently, plans do not fully capture the children's health, social and</p>	

physical development needs. To date this has not had an impact on practice because staff make good use of other documents used within the centre to inform and guide their practice. That said, this is not best practice and does not assist in providing holistic support for children and their parents.

Children and their families benefit greatly from the positive links made within the local community. These resources include play groups, health centres, places of worship, community learning and specialist services. The team strikes a good balance in supporting such interactions, while encouraging parents to take responsibility for themselves. This level of integration enable families to build up links and to access support and advice they need during their assessment process.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted and strong links are in place with local health professionals, such as a health visitor who regularly attends the centre. All necessary medical consents are obtained and the arrangements for the administration of medication are made clear and agreed at the point of placement. Each family is provided with their own lockable medication cabinet. This ensures that medication is kept safe and promotes families' independence with regard to medication.

The collaboration between internal and external partners is consistently effective in ensuring that placement goals are achieved. Social workers, commissioners and health professionals appreciate the high level of feedback they receive. This was confirmed by a professional who stated: 'I have been impressed with Amber and I would certainly place with them again. I am very confident in the team's ability to respond to families and the level of communication and professionalism is excellent.'

	Judgement grade
The quality of assessment	Good
<p>Children benefit from an assessment that is focused on safeguarding and their well-being. The assessment is individually tailored to each family. It is detailed and draws upon a range of evidence to assess the parents' capacity to change. Parents are supported throughout the assessment and are appropriately challenged when this is needed. They are encouraged to reflect upon their own behaviour in order to enhance their understanding of how to maintain their children's welfare, safety and development. Professionals describe the assessment process as, 'Good quality and includes very good evidence.' Effective liaison with key professionals, both prior to admission and throughout the assessment, contributes significantly to the quality of the assessment report.</p>	
<p>A qualified and experienced social worker leads the assessment process. The report is clear and concise, and includes good evidence while telling a story of the children's journeys. The reports provide clear and realistic recommendations for the</p>	

children's futures, based on sound evidence. Professionals confirm that the assessment enables them to make well-informed decisions in the best interests of the children.

Parents experience very good levels of consultation throughout their assessment. One parent said, 'Staff keep you informed from day one. They tell you as it is, good or bad.' Weekly key-worker sessions and monthly progress meetings ensure that parents are kept motivated and supported throughout. Parents spoken with during the inspection confirm that they have had the opportunity to maximise their potential and to develop new skills. Staff make good use of a wide range of teaching methods, including experiential learning, key-work sessions, group and individual sessions. External professionals also visit the centre and undertake regular training workshops to help parents to improve their parenting skills. This ensures that parents are given every opportunity to expand their knowledge and to learn how to support, safeguard and nurture their children and maintain their children's welfare.

The use of surveillance is supported by robust policies and procedures. Parents understand and consent to the use of surveillance systems during their assessment. When surveillance systems are not used for the purposes of the assessment, cameras are switched off in order to respect the privacy of parents. Appropriate consent documentation agreements are on file to evidence that parents understand the reasons for the use of surveillance systems.

	Judgement grade
How well children and parents are helped and protected	Good
<p>The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is always the most important consideration for staff. They have strong links with other agencies that provide access to up-to-date advice and guidance in order to ensure that everyday practice protects children from harm. High staffing ratios ensure that there is appropriate support, supervision and monitoring. Staff are extremely clear about what action they would take in response to any concerns that arise. This demonstrates that they fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities and give the safety and well-being of children the highest priority at all times.</p> <p>Parents spoken with during the inspection said that they felt very safe living at the family centre. They feel very relaxed in the company of staff and other parents. Staff are open and honest and encourage parents to take responsibility for their actions. They are quick to challenge any inappropriate or antisocial behaviour. Any tension that arises between families is managed sensitively and staff encourage parents to work through their feelings and become more solution-focused. There are clear expectations around behaviour. Families confirmed that the expectations</p>	

and rules are 'fair' and are implemented to keep everyone safe.

The manager and staff ensure that risk assessments are completed prior to a family being admitted. However, these are not updated continually, as risks reduce or increase. This has the potential to weaken risk management strategies. To date, there is no evidence that this has had an adverse impact on children's safety. However, this is not best practice and requires revision. This has been acknowledged by the manager, who is in the process of remedying the shortfall to ensure that there is a stronger, more robust risk management system.

The assessment of risk in relation to the impact of admissions has not been robustly managed. For example, there is little evidence to show how the admission of families may have an impact on the risky behaviours of others. To date, this has not had an impact on families. However, it has the potential to compromise the effectiveness of the centre's matching process and their ability to make well-informed decisions about admissions.

Since opening, the centre has established effective working relationships with the placing authorities and safeguarding agencies. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and have appropriate processes for reporting concerns for both child and adult protection. Safeguarding is fully understood by staff and given optimum priority at all times.

The centre has effective arrangements in place for recruiting staff. Records demonstrate that the manager undertakes robust recruitment and selection processes. Appropriate checks and references are undertaken prior to employment. This means that as far as possible children are protected from unsuitable adults.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>The centre is managed by a dedicated manager, who was registered with Ofsted in May 2014. She has extensive experience in social care and has the necessary qualifications for the role. The responsible individual and the registered manager work very well together and are both very knowledgeable about their respective areas of work. Their combined experience underpins the centre's philosophy, principles and working practices. Both lead by example and have high aspirations for the service and the families they support.</p> <p>Staff benefit from regular, good-quality training that keeps them well informed. The majority of staff are either fully qualified or working towards their level 3 diploma. Staff describe their work as 'rewarding' and 'enjoyable'. They feel well supported by the management team, as noted by one staff member who said, 'Managers are absolutely fantastic, they are very supportive. The whole staff team pulls together</p>	

because we have a shared ethos. This way of working comes straight from the managers.'

Staff benefit from regular supervision, which enables them to reflect upon their practice and recognise their strengths and areas for development. Staff are very well supported and feel that good management support enables them to operate successfully as a team. Practice is continually reviewed and managers provide professional direction during staff meetings and supervision to ensure best practice by all.

Monitoring systems are not sufficiently robust. The manager does not routinely monitor the quality of care provided at the centre in line with 'The Residential Family Centre Regulations'. This means that there is no clear system to identify and evaluate patterns and trends, and, therefore, future planning is not founded on robust evidence. Because systematic monitoring is not being carried out, a report of the findings has not been provided to Ofsted as required. This impedes the regulator from carrying out its monitoring responsibilities.

The manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses and was able to articulate these throughout the inspection. However, she does not have a completed written development plan. This means that there is little evidence to demonstrate how the manager identifies priorities, establishes goals and measures overall performance. More positively, this was fully acknowledged during the inspection and the manager is in the process of formulating a detailed plan to build on areas requiring further improvement.

The statement of purpose defines the life and work of the centre. This means that stakeholders are clear about how the centre works and what to expect from the service. Similarly, the parents' guide helps families to understand how they will be supported, what their rights are and what the expectations of them are. Both documents are reviewed regularly and the manager ensures that relevant parties are notified of any changes.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences of children and parents are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of residential family centres: framework for inspection'.

The inspection judgements:

Outstanding

Good

Requires improvement

Inadequate

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences of children and parents staying at the residential family centre. Inspectors considered whether the work of the residential family centre is founded on safe care, individualised support and robust parenting assessment practice. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, parents and each other, and discussed the effectiveness of assessment, support and care given to children and parents. Wherever possible, they talked to children and parents. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the residential family centre knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and parents.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002 and the national minimum standards.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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