

Amber Family Ltd

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45 Part Street, Southport PR8 1HY

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential family centre

This residential family centre is registered to provide care and accommodation for four families. The centre provides residential assessments that assist local authorities and courts in making decisions which promote the welfare of children.

Inspection dates: 16 to 17 August 2017

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: First inspection

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This residential family centre is good because:

- A key feature of this residential family centre is the quality of relationships

between staff and families. The atmosphere is relaxed and welcoming, and relationships are mutually respectful. This enables parents to feel safe and secure throughout their assessment.

- Staff are genuine, caring and transparent, and are committed to helping parents to make meaningful progress to overcome past difficulties. Staff are skilled and experienced, and provide families with good quality individual support and guidance during their assessments.
- The assessments of families are rigorous and provide very clear recommendations to court based on detailed evidence gathered over a 12-week period.
- The final assessment report is child focused. The language used in the report is jargon-free, evaluative and empathetic. This makes the report accessible and meaningful to parents.
- The safeguarding arrangements in the centre are effective, and child protection runs through all aspects of the centre's practice.
- Parents benefit from a range of in-house and external training. These specialist programmes help to build resilience, enable reflection and aid parents' understanding of personal issues that impact on their ability to meet their child's needs.
- The centre is led effectively by an experienced and motivated manager. The management team provides visible and confident leadership based on professional respect, autonomy, fairness and transparency.
- Effective training competently equips staff for their role. New staff benefit from a thorough induction programme, enabling them to use transferable skills and acquire the relevant knowledge for their roles.
- The centre offers a good quality service for children and their parents. Shortfalls are minor and can be easily rectified, and do not detract from the overall quality of the service.

The residential family centre's areas for development:

- The staff say that they are very well supported in their roles by the manager. However, not all staff benefit from regular supervision, and none of the staff have had their performance evaluated in a formal appraisal.
- The manager's report on the quality of care is not sufficiently detailed. It lacks in-depth analysis and does not demonstrate consultation with families. Therefore, it does not assist the manager to understand the effectiveness of the centre, nor does it demonstrate fully the impact the service is having on the lives of children and their parents.
- Medication records lack clarity. For example, details of how and when medication is administered, and who administers the medication, are confusing. This has the potential to compromise the health and well-being of 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
The registered person shall ensure that all persons employed by him receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 17 (5)(a))	01/10/2017
The registered person shall establish and maintain a system for reviewing and improving the quality of care provided at the residential family centre. This system shall provide consultation with residents. (Regulation 23 (1)(a)(b)(3))	01/10/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure there is an effective policy on the safe management of medicines which includes a written record of all medication. (NMS 6.6)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and parents: good

Children and parents live in an environment that feels very much like a family home. The atmosphere is relaxed and the quality of relationships between staff and families is a key strength. One parent said: 'The centre is like a second home to me. I will truly miss this place and the staff team when we leave. I cannot fault any of the staff team, they are all amazing at what they do.'

Families are regularly encouraged by staff to discuss their views about living together. This helps to tackle any emerging issues and promotes mutual respect. At the time of the inspection, the group of families got on really well, and there was no conflict between them. This was the result of effective admission and matching processes.

Families confirm that they were made to feel welcome from the moment they arrived at the centre. One parent said: 'Initially we didn't want to be here, but I can't fault the place. The staff team have made us feel very welcome.' On arrival at the centre each family is provided with personalised childcare gifts, such as a hand-crafted crochet blanket for each baby. These little touches help to settle families, and provide a clear message to parents that somebody cares.

Staff understand that saying goodbye is just as important as saying hello. On leaving the centre, parents receive support and guidance around the practicalities of moving. Should parents be leaving without their children, this is managed sensitively and with compassion and understanding. Staff encourage parents to talk about their feelings, and they do their utmost to support families during this difficult time.

Placement plans are highly effective. Plans are agreed between staff and parents, and identify the key problems that each family faces. Parents confirm that their experience of the service is inclusive and informative. Parents are engaged at every stage of the assessment and have the opportunity to comment formally in weekly progress meetings. During meetings, parents are encouraged to recognise what has gone well, and identify their own target areas. At the end of each meeting, parents choose a charm for a personalised bracelet as a symbol of progression. One parent said: 'I really enjoyed the weekly key-work session. It helped me see how I was progressing. I also really liked getting a charm every week.'

Staff work in a transparent and nurturing manner. They are skilled at identifying each parent's learning style in order to uniquely tailor the assessment process. Evidence gathered at this inspection clearly highlights that parents engage very well, and are clearly receptive to new ideas and ways of managing difficulties. As a result, a number of children have remained with their parents after being discharged from the service.

Parents learn essential life skills for self-development, which enhance their practical and interpersonal abilities. Staff assist parents with applying for benefits, making housing applications, budgeting and cooking. The centre facilitates a regular cooking club that parents actively engage in and enjoy. Staff are also skilled at delivering emotional resilience work. This helps to enhance parents' coping mechanisms, problem-solving skills and stress management. This was confirmed by one parent who said that staff are 'supportive' and that group and individual sessions have been 'very helpful to learn more about building and understanding better relationships'.

The final assessment reports are completed by competent and qualified social workers. The reports are of a high standard and provide a detailed narrative of the parents' journey and their capacity to change. Clear recommendations are made in the reports, and these enable the court and placing authority to make the necessary decisions in the best interests of the child. Professionals are complimentary about the quality of the final reports. One social worker said about a particular report: 'Staff supported [parent's name] transition to the centre well and supported her throughout the assessment. Staff were skilled at managing [name] expectations and set clear rules from the onset. The assessment report explored all the pertinent areas. It also strongly addressed the risks highlighted in the family's history. The final report was comprehensive and evidence based.'

The service uses a phased assessment process that covers primary care tasks, routines and emotional aspects of parenting. The format of assessments is continually under review. This enables the manager to ensure that the process is person centred and the approach taken is not 'one size fits all'. Assessments are realistic about the parents' capacity to change and their ability to meet their child's needs and anticipate future needs. Parents are aware of the content of the assessment reports and the assessor's recommendations. Staff are skilled at delivering difficult messages, and do this in a non-judgemental manner. Recommendations are made in the children's best interests, and are based on comprehensive evidence.

The centre's surveillance systems are located in the home and in external areas. When surveillance systems are not used for the purposes of the assessment, cameras are covered up in order to respect the privacy of parents. Parents confirm that they know about the use of surveillance systems, and agreements on file evidence that they understand the reasons for their use. These mechanisms make sure that children are well protected from harm and abuse while they are at the residential family centre.

How well children and parents are helped and protected: good

The centre's primary concern is to keep children safe. From the onset of placement, the safety and protection of children is given optimum priority, and is integral to the day-to-day operation of the service. Everyone involved in supporting families plays a role in ensuring that children are protected from harm. Staff are confident in all areas

of child protection, and have the necessary knowledge and skills to keep children safe.

Partnership working is a key strength at this residential family centre. Staff work in close collaboration with other professionals who are working with the families. This is particularly the case with health professionals, placing social workers, guardians and community-based children's centres. Professionals confirm that liaison with partner agencies is effective, and that the staff team has fostered good relationships with them. This collaborative approach ensures that families are provided with the necessary support during the assessment process.

Staff encourage parents' participation with community-based children's centres to support staff efforts at the centre. Parents have access to a range of creative learning experiences in order to promote healthy attachment and bonding. Staff intervene if there are concerns about children's attachment and emotional needs, and make sure that appropriate support and guidance is made available to help promote the development of healthy family relationships.

Risk assessments are thorough, individualised and regularly updated, and reflect the complex and diverse needs of each family. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the risks to individual children. They are vigilant in their supervision and observation, which significantly reduces known risks and potential hazards. Regular evaluation of risk also ensures that staff are aware of any changes to agreed risk-management strategies. These measures further promote children's welfare and well-being.

Families accessing the service understand that disruptive behaviours are not tolerated. Clear house rules are in place and are routinely followed by those who are resident. Parents and social workers understand that if a parent became disruptive or aggressive the assessment would end. As a result, critical incidents are rare and families are supported to resolve any conflict constructively. General grumbles between residents are attended to quickly and effectively to make sure that the environment continues to have a harmonious and pleasant atmosphere.

Child and adult protection concerns are addressed swiftly and robustly. Staff have a clear understanding of safeguarding procedures, and understand what action to take in the event of allegations, suspicion of abuse or unsafe practice. Various professionals confirm that the organisation is transparent and that concerns are reported appropriately. No allegations or complaints have been made since the centre opened. However, procedures are in place to ensure that any investigation or concerns are managed fairly, quickly and in consultation with appropriate external agencies.

Arrangements for the management and administration of medication are currently under review. This is because the manager has identified that the current policy is ineffective. Currently, medication records lack clarity. For example, it is unclear who is responsible for administration of medication, and how and when medication should

be taken. To date, this has not impacted on the health and well-being of any child or parent at the centre. However, it has the potential to, and therefore requires some revision.

The health and safety of families is taken seriously. Routine checks and tests of equipment and living environments mean that the centre is a safe place to live. The recruitment of staff is robust. The manager follows agreed procedures to ensure thorough scrutiny of applicants prior to their employment. This prevents unsuitable people from being able to work with vulnerable families.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Families benefit from living in an effectively managed residential family centre. The manager is ambitious and child focused. She has the relevant qualifications to undertake the role and has worked as a social worker for many years. Leaders and managers have a shared vision and foster a clear determination, energy and motivation to continually improve the centre. This is an ethos the team embraces.

The staff team is cohesive, supportive and brings a variety of skills and knowledge to the centre. Staff spoken with during the inspection said that they enjoy their work and are proud of what they do. Staff morale is high, and the team members work very closely together and have positive relationships, which adds to the settled and relaxed feel of the centre. The consistency they offer in their approach greatly benefits the families, and there are positive relationships across the board.

The manager has established a link with external training providers, and there is a clear investment in development opportunities. Staff have the opportunities to undertake additional training to complement their learning, alongside the internal workshops. Leaders and managers are skilled at encouraging and supporting individual staff members to develop. They do this to ensure succession planning for the organisation. As a result, staff have increased their knowledge base and are confident in their roles.

Staff spoken with during the inspection say that they feel very well supported by the manager. One staff member said: 'The manager is really good, you don't feel nervous about approaching her for anything. She's really approachable and supportive and because of that everyone loves working here.' However, not all staff receive supervision or appraisals at appropriate intervals. This has the potential to hinder the manager's ability to routinely monitor and help improve staff's performance, competency and conduct.

Managers have a very good understanding of the centre's strengths and weaknesses, and areas highlighted in this report for improvement or development had already been identified by managers at the time of the inspection. This evidences that internal monitoring systems are in place. Visits by the responsible individual are also well documented. They give a clear overview of care practices, and any actions

raised are quickly attended to by the manager. However, the manager's report on the quality of care is less robust. It lacks in-depth analysis and evaluation of parents' views about the centre, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it. This does not assist the manager to understand the effectiveness of the approaches in securing improved outcomes for young people.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and parents. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and parents. They watched how professional staff work with children and parents and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: 1239886

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Inspector(s)

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