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Chariteens Residential Family Centre

Inspection report for residential family centre

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Inspector Sharon Payne
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Service information

Brief description of the service

Chariteens Residential Family Centre Ltd is a privately owned company. This residential family centre is registered to provide care and accommodation for six families. Families benefit from their own rooms within a large residential property. Alongside parenting assessments, the centre is able to facilitate psychological assessments and toxicology tests.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Requires improvement: a service that may meet minimum requirements, but is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of a good judgement.

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall experiences of children and parents

Overall experiences of children and parents Requires improvement

Families receive an adequate service, within a safe, homely environment. They benefit from individualised support tailored to their needs. Learning addresses child developmental needs, parenting capacity, safety and stimulation, in addition to a parent's own personal development and life skills.

Parents benefit from key work sessions, which enable them to reflect and focus on their areas of development. Life-story books provide a valued memento detailing their past and their personal journey whilst at the centre.

There is a strong understanding of the need to address mental health issues and emotional wellbeing. Parents have access to free counselling. The strategic alliance with therapeutic consultants enables families to access specialist services in the comfort of the centre.

Assessments concisely detail parental capacity, their ability to change, complicating factors and appropriate theories to demonstrate the impact on children. Staff benefit from assessment training. Assessments take full account of the placing authority requests. They clearly detail realistic recommendations which promote children's best interests.

Strong partnership arrangements provide opportunities for families to access a wide range of community resources. This helps them become a better parent and individual. They can enrol in specialist substance misuse programmes and tackle domestic violence issues. Parents can also obtain specific certificates, which recognise their achievements in parenting, learning new skills and addressing their addictions.

The positive links with safeguarding personnel ensures staff benefit from extensive training. Parents use the complaint procedure and leaders and managers effectively address concerns. This includes appropriately using staff disciplinary procedures.

Admission and discharge procedures ensure a sound transition into and out of the centre. Parents take a central role in care planning. Throughout the assessment process, they receive regular feedback and copies of relevant documentation. Families also influence collective decision-making, sharing their views in residents' meetings.

The accommodation is homely and comfortable. Children benefit from their own playroom and they enjoy a range of books, toys and indoor and outdoor play equipment. They can relax with their family in the communal lounge, which has satellite television channels.

Leadership and management arrangements are adequate. There is an acknowledgment that particular areas of practice require strengthening. The quality assurance system must comply with regulations and the national minimum standards. The register of families must be consistently maintained. The statement of purpose requires updating to reflect the current staff team and the ages of children that they can cater for. Staff recruitment records must detail an explanation of any gaps in employment.

Recommendations focus on the improving assessment record keeping and routinely requesting professional feedback after each placement. Staff should have the opportunity to reflect on practice. They should all benefit from conflict management training. There is also a need for an effective policy on the use of alcohol.

Two recommendations are repeated from the last inspection. These relate to employing male staff and keeping staff up-to-date on professional and legal developments.

Areas of improvement

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.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
4	Statement of purpose Update the statement of purpose to reflect the current staff team and ages of children accommodated. Regulation 4(1))	01/12/2016
19	Records Maintain a family register, as specified in Schedule 4. (Regulation 19(3))	01/12/2016
23	Review of quality of care Ensure that quality of care reviews provide for consultation with residents and staff and demonstrate how the centre is improving. (Regulation 23)	01/01/2017
16	Fitness of workers Ensure full and satisfactory information is available for employees, as specified in Schedule 2. (Regulation 16) This particularly relates to a satisfactory written explanation of any gaps in employment.	01/12/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- Consider the needs of fathers in the deployment of staff. (NMS 15.1)
- Keep staff up to date with professional and legal developments. (NMS 16.2)
- Ensure that assessments are carried out in a manner consistent with guidance in 'Working together to safeguard children'. These relate specifically to ensuring information is recorded systematically, and focuses on the action and outcomes for children. (NMS1.2)
- Seek feedback following a placement from involved professionals, as part of the quality assurance process. (NMS 1.15)
- Enable staff to reflect and learn from incidents, and ensure any review informs future practice. This information should inform discussions of the family placement plan. (NMS 4.6)
- Provide training in conflict management. (NMS 4.4)
- Produce an effective policy on the use of alcohol. (NMS 6.8)
- Ensure that monthly regulation 25 visits are lodged at the centre and made available to inspectors, as required. (NMS 19.7)

Inspection judgements

Quality of assessment

Requires improvement

Leaders and managers have made efforts to strengthen the assessments process. The employment of an experienced social worker to lead in this area has helped. During the inspection, an issue was noted regarding inconsistent recording. This relates to the exploration of safeguarding concerns, for one family. Examples are incidents of a parent swearing at their baby and finding a mark on their baby. It is important that staff check and discuss information with parents, and that the impact of what is happening to the child is clearly identified in case records. Recordings should detail this, in accordance with 'Working together to safeguard children'. This will inform assessments and court decision making.

Professionals highlighted that final reports have a 'good level of evidence'. A solicitor highlighted that reports are 'comprehensive'. Placing authorities positively commented that assessments are within timescales and follow the letter of instruction. Professionals highlighted that evidence is presented well in court. As part of the quality assurance process, leaders and managers do not routinely seek feedback from professionals. This information is actively sought from parents. Feedback from professionals would assist in improving the assessment process.

Assessments concisely detail parental capacity, the realistic ability to change and complicating factors. Evidence is generally sound, and the interweaving of appropriate theories assists in identifying risks. Assessments fully include strengths-based child protection models which help with risk assessment and safety planning. They are child centred, identifying areas that need to change and the wider needs of the family. A parent highlighted, 'I accepted that things could be done differently in the best interests of my daughter.' They admitted that they had 'learned to accept positive criticism' and 'gained more confidence'.

The centre offers a comprehensive programme, tailored to fit the timeframe of care proceedings. The process is multidisciplinary, incorporating the views of social workers, psychotherapists, psychologists, drug and alcohol workers, and family support professionals. The centre is able to offer an assessment which can include a psychological assessment, a parenting assessment and toxicology tests. The four-phase assessment process covers primary care tasks and routines, and the emotional aspects of parenting. The latter phases focus on non-directive observations and conclude with the discharge phase.

Staff assess parents in accordance with their personal support plan, which is

regularly reviewed. This family placement plan covers child developmental needs, parenting capacity, safety and stimulation. Staff use direct observations, monitoring, recording, role modelling, practical advice, demonstrations, verbal feedback and pictorial aids to collate their evidence. The assessment process includes the use of closed-circuit television. Parents confirm their consent for surveillance methods. Leaders and managers have produced a written surveillance policy and complementary guidance, which ensures that observations follow good practice.

Assessments take full account of the placing authority's requests. Parents are accountable through contracts and taking a key role in their weekly plans. This strengthens their self-responsibility and actively engages them in decision making. They receive ongoing and regular feedback about their parenting. Structured reviews and regular summaries enable parents and placing authorities to keep up to date with progress. Parents know the content of the assessment report and can comment on areas of disagreement. Assessments clearly detail realistic recommendations in the child's best interests. The service is also able to provide ongoing support through its free aftercare service.

How well children and parents are protected and helped

Requires improvement

Families receive appropriate individualised support which relates to their diverse needs. A parent confirmed that they had had a 'good experience' and 'learned many things about parenting which have enhanced my knowledge'. A social work professional highlighted that staff 'understand risk' and are 'very vigilant'. A few areas require further attention. These relate to recruitment records, managing conflict and having a robust alcohol policy.

Staff work with parents who can present with challenging behavioural needs. Not all staff have been trained in managing conflict. This would enable all staff to work constructively with all parents. The information on the misuse of alcohol is very limited and can be misinterpreted. Staff require clear guidance to enable them to work professionally with families.

Leaders and managers endeavour to promote safe recruitment. Staff do not work unsupervised without relevant checks having been undertaken. Shortfalls relate to there being no written evidence of gaps in employment. This information is needed to ensure that unsuitable people do not have the opportunity to work with children or vulnerable adults.

Parents express sufficient satisfaction with the service. A parent stated, 'It has been an overall good experience.' They felt that it has made them 'a better person and

parent'. Another parent highlighted that there are 'a lot of positives here' and that they had 'received good insight'. Parents learn the importance of structured routines and the principles of good childcare, child development, secure attachments, play and stimulation.

Staff undertake direct individual and group work with parents. Families also receive support from activities and parenting classes within the community. Parents have successfully attained certificates in baby massage, early talk and baby signing, and from a parenting course. This helps to nurture the bond between parents and their child. It also gives parents a sense of achievement to have a documented confirmation of their learning.

Parents engage in fun activities with their children. These include heuristic, messy and sensory motor play. They enjoy trips to the park, a children's activity centre and a farm. These all help to create a photographic life-story book of their past and their journey while at the centre. Parents express their creativity through arts and crafts sessions. A popular pastime is mindfulness colouring, which a parent states helps them to 'relax and unravel the stress from the previous day'.

Parents benefit from key-work sessions which enable them to reflect and focus on their areas of development. Parents admit that this work is challenging, yet beneficial. They highlight being able to learn from their mistakes and build on their self-esteem. Parents learn the importance of positive personal relationships and anger management. An example of the latter is understanding the antecedent behaviour and consequence model, which enables a parent to address their triggers. Parents also feel able to disclose and discuss past abuse.

Parents receive practical support with budgeting, benefits advice and other life skills. There is an understanding of the stressful nature of the residential process for families. Staff are available for childminding, when needed. The organisation of social outings helps to bring valued leisure time to each family. These have included trips to the seaside and being treated to a group meal out. Families can also relax in the evening by watching a film together in the lounge.

There are sound health arrangements which provide efficient access to relevant health professionals. Parents receive support to address their holistic needs. This includes registering their child's birth, psychiatric and psychological support, relationship counselling, support with family planning, accessing health services, nutrition and cooking. Parents benefit from an intensive programme to address their substance misuse. They can participate in an intuition recovery programme, enabling them to obtain a certificate in addictive desire recognition. A placing authority praised

the 'good links with drugs and domestic violence services'.

Families and staff have a positive working relationship. Parents influence decision making through participating in care planning and reviews, and collectively in residents' meetings. A parent highlighted that 'staff are proactive with everything'. They felt they 'bonded well' and that staff were 'lovely and helpful, and have your best interests at heart'. Another parent commented, 'I know that trusting professionals can be a help in the long run' and 'I feel proud of myself'.

Families receive protection from the adequate safeguarding arrangements. Certificates confirm that the premises are environmentally safe for children, which protects them from harm. In addition to risk assessments and sound health and safety policies, child and adult protection procedures comply with regulations and the service has a copy of 'Working together to safeguard children 2015'.

Parents learn the importance of prioritising their child's needs. A parent stated that they had 'developed genuine insight and commitment to maintain appropriate support'. Parents work with staff to develop a safety plan with the aim of keeping their child safe from significant harm. Staff raise parents' awareness of the impact of domestic violence on their child and the importance of internet safety.

Staff benefit from extensive training which covers the wider aspects of child protection and safeguarding. The strong relationship with the host authority's Local Safeguarding Children's Board enables staff to access a comprehensive level of training. Partnership arrangements also enable good liaison when there are safeguarding concerns. The leaders and manager also take appropriate disciplinary action to address poor practice.

The family centre consists of two terraced houses and blends easily into the residential street. Families have a choice of a single or double fully furnished room with a cot and baby equipment. They share two bathrooms and have their own washbasin in their room. They can choose to dine in the kitchen or in the lounge. There are ample laundry facilities in the two utility rooms and an internal cupboard for storing pushchairs.

Children have their own playroom, which provides a vibrant, stimulating, educational environment. They have a wide range of toys and books. The artificial-turf garden includes a slide, bikes and other play equipment. The communal lounge is a place for relaxation and learning. The comfortable lounge has a large television with a full range of satellite channels, and parents have access to free broadband.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers Requires improvement

Leadership and management arrangements are adequate. There is an acknowledgment that particular areas of practice need to be strengthened. Leaders and managers are aware of the weaknesses and have identified plans to address them. A placing authority highlights that the centre 'has positives, just areas which could be better'. The shortfalls relate to record keeping, quality assurance, the statement of purpose, and staff's deployment and their ongoing development.

The quality assurance system does not fully meet regulatory requirements. Regulation 23 reports provide limited evaluation regarding improving the quality of care. There is no impact of consultation with parents and staff. Reports do not provide a meaningful reflection of the quality of care or set objectives for further improvement. The responsible individual has a good system for the monthly regulation 25 visits. Due to a misunderstanding, these reports have not been forwarded to Ofsted for several months. Leaders and managers recognised this mistake and agreed to rectify this issue promptly.

The centre has a comprehensive statement of purpose. However, this document has not been updated to reflect the current team of staff. Neither does it refer to the fact that they can care for children beyond 18 months of age. Staff do not consistently maintain the register of families admitted to the centre. Regulations highlight the need to keep a record of all families and their essential information. On admission, parents receive a welcome pack that includes their residents' guide, policies and procedures, and comprehensive information in relation to their assessment. They also have useful contact numbers of organisations and personnel who are able to help them.

At the last inspection, recommendations were made to improve the quality and standards of care further. These related to assessments, the surveillance policy, male staff and enabling staff to keep up to date with professional and legal developments. Several recommendations have been met. Efforts have been made to make assessments more robust and ensure that all staff have relevant training. The satisfactory surveillance policy provides a clear summary of practice. Leaders and managers have not been successful in their recruitment of male staff to support fathers. Neither are staff routinely made aware of changes in professional and legal guidance. This hampers the impact of good practice on their work.

The registered manager is also the owner of the business. This individual has over 20 years' experience in social care. They have prior experience of managing a supported service for mothers and their babies, and are educated to a high level in strategic leadership and management. A parent expressed their gratitude for the manager,

stating, 'We love you and will not forget you.' The deputy manager reinforces leadership and has extensive social work experience with children and families and court work. A social work professional describes this individual as a 'strength', with a 'good understanding' of the work.

Professionals praise the 'good communication', helpfulness and willingness of staff. The female staff team includes qualified social workers and support workers whose expertise includes therapeutic practices, forensic mental health, nursing and early years work. The staff team is culturally and linguistically diverse, which enables it to work effectively with families of various ethnicities.

The centre is an approved establishment for the assessed supported year in employment for newly qualified social workers. Leaders and managers ensure that all staff have the necessary vocational qualification or the equivalent. Staff attend team meetings, and receive regular supervision and training to help them in their respective roles. There was limited evidence of staff being able to reflect on their work. There was no record of learning from incidents to improve practice further.

Leaders and managers have a good awareness of relevant local services. Their collaboration with a children's centre enables the registered manager to sit on their advisory board. This partnership enables them to access a wide range of children's activities. The strong links with the mental health community team enable parents to access specialist services. Leaders and managers also have a purposeful agreement with the Institute of Psychotrauma, for adults experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.

There is a forward-thinking coalition of a team of therapeutic consultants which enables families to access services within the comfort of the centre. This includes child and family psychotherapy, therapeutic parenting sessions, parent and infant bonding sessions, drug and alcohol counselling, and psychiatric assessment, diagnosis and treatment. Parents benefit from a swift, responsive service which works effectively within the short time frame constraint of the assessment. This enables the prompt confirmation or dismissal of conditions and subsequent intervention. This support actively benefits families.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework for the inspection of residential family centres.