

# Statement of Purpose Orchard House Greenway Road SC408039

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#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Orchard House Statement of Purpose is designed to be a helpful and user-friendly document. It is designed with staff, local authorities, and other professionals in mind.
- 1.2 This full document is available for parents on request, though a 'Summary Statement of Purpose' that is shorter and more reader-friendly is provided to families on arrival. The summary version details the facilities at Orchard House, the assessment process, and the support that parents receive during their assessment. It also outlines our ethos and details our emphasis on the safety and the needs of children.

# 2 Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 Our primary objective is to provide accurate, objective, comprehensive, and evidence-based information to the Courts to facilitate the decision-making process which impacts upon the lives of children and their parents. We support children to be safely cared for by their parents in the community for the long-term whenever possible.
- 2.2 We achieve this by providing a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment for children and parents with comprehensive support focussed on promoting each child's wellbeing.
- 2.3 We help parents develop parenting skills, providing them with a model for a secure, safe, and happy family life. We recognise the individuality of each child and parent and we help identify and build on strengths and develop the skills needed to care for children for the long-term.
- 2.4 We provide comprehensive evidence-based assessments, grounded in the established theoretical framework outlined by the Department of Health Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (2000), the updated Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), Signs of Safety (UK, 2012), and a strengthsbased approach is now firmly embedded as our practice model. Our paperwork has been revised with the Munro Review of Child Protection in mind to ensure that a child's journey through placement with us is a primary consideration. The Assessment Team fully consider the concerns raised by professionals regarding each family and the specific instructions detailed by solicitors. Their range of training and expertise in the assessment of children and their families provides them with the ability and knowledge to carry out additional specialist assessments including, for example, the Psychological Assessment of children and adults, Risk Assessments for violence and sexual violence, and Cognitive / Capacity Assessments. Our social workers can also be commissioned to provide Special Guardianship and Kinship Assessments, and they regularly undertake 'Keep Safe' work for both children and adults, and domestic violence work.
- 2.5 The support and monitoring of families is individually tailored to the specific needs of each family. We regularly review monitoring and reduce it as soon as it is safe to do so. In this way we are able to provide assessments representative of a family at home.



2.6 We offer support for parents at Orchard House that aim to promote appropriate parenting skills and strategies based on well-researched evidence-based models and attachment theory and intervention are well integrated in our work. This reflects the Orchard House philosophy of working in partnership with parents and their children and helping them build competence and confidence in their skills.

# 3 Ethos and Philosophy of Orchard House

- 3.1 Our philosophy is embedded in the Children Act (1989, 2002, & 2004) and the UN Convention on Rights of a Child (1989). We promote family life in the knowledge that a child's best interests are met within the birth family wherever possible. We recognise that children and families may become involved with statutory Child Protection services for a wide variety of reasons, for example because of insufficient support and knowledge within a parent's support network or because some parents themselves have experienced neglectful and abusive parenting which may have left them with insufficient skills to fully parent.
- 3.2 At Orchard House we place a strong emphasis on the parent-child relationship knowing that the quality of an attachment to their parental figure has profound implications for a child's later adjustment towards separation, autonomy, and emotional wellbeing. We have therefore created a nurturing environment, informed by various schools of thought including attachment theory and using a person-centred and collaborative approach, to help parents develop their confidence and sense of self-efficacy in taking responsibility for parenting their children.
- 3.3 Our overriding ethos, without exception, is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children who come to Orchard House and uphold the view that the child's interests are paramount and stand above all other considerations.

# 4 Assessment, Monitoring, and Therapeutic Techniques

- 4.1 All the staff at Orchard House have a thorough understanding and knowledge of the 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' (Department of Health, 2000) and the more recent 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children' (HM Government, 2018), on which our parenting assessments are based. The Assessment Team utilises aspects of the Signs of Safety model, embedded within a strengths-based approach to child protection casework. This structured and standardised approach identifies areas of parenting abilities and skills on which the Assessment Team and Family Support Workers make direct observations to inform the parenting assessment.
- 4.2 Children at Orchard House may be voluntarily accommodated under Section 20 of the Children's Act 1989 or subject to an Interim Care Order. They may be subject to Public Law Outline planning, or Care Proceedings and placed under Section 38(6) of the Children's Act 1989 for a parenting assessment.



- 4.3 Orchard House incorporate a variety of specialist parenting assessment tools and resources, as necessary to meet the individual needs of specific families. For example, we regularly use elements of The Parenting Assessment Manual (PAMs; McGaw et al, 1998) when assessing competence of parents with a Learning Disability. The PAMs identifies the needs and abilities of individuals on a range of parenting domains, and highlights where intervention may be targeted. In addition, a range of parenting programmes are available including Circle of Security, Webster Stratton, and tailored workshops. We ensure that our work is delivered using a range of methodologies and is responsive to the learning needs and style of the individual parents.
- Initially, families tend to be observed on a continual basis through direct observations by staff in the vicinity of the family or via dual visual-audio CCTV monitoring. Cameras are located in all the communal areas of Orchard House and in the bedroom areas. CCTV monitoring, including night vision, discreetly ensures a child's safety whilst concurrently assessing parenting skills. Although parents can initially find the thought of CCTV monitoring invasive, we highlight to parents that observations and CCTV recordings also provide parents with an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and strengths. CCTV is actively used as a feedback tool to reinforce examples of progress, and to encourage parents to consider areas of concern from an alternative point of view. CCTV and monitoring arrangements are regularly reviewed to ensure families are observed in the least intrusive way possible whilst ensuring safeguarding.
- 4.5 Family Support Workers are highly trained in recording objective observations using family-specific 'Assessment Forms', based on the 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' (Department of Health, 2000) and the more recent 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (HM Government, 2018), to facilitate comprehensive data collection. All our paperwork has been revised with the Munro Review of Child Protection in mind to ensure that a child's journey through placement with us is a primary consideration.
- 4.6 'Assessment Forms' provide the evidence-base to support the feedback and discussions that families receive as part of the Weekly Progress Meeting. Orchard House prides itself on providing balanced assessments, documenting both parenting strengths and progress, as well as areas of concern that need greater attention.
- 4.7 Information from the Assessment Forms and the Weekly Progress Meetings provide the basis for the Summary of Placement Reports. These are considered and regularly reviewed to maintain child-focussed assessment and to ensure that expert analysis is grounded in the evidence obtained throughout the assessment process.
- 4.8 We aim to provide a transparent service for both parents and professionals. Families are fully informed of the contents of all written documentation surrounding their progress. We liaise closely with professionals involved with a family and make all records, feedback documents, and reports available to all parties involved in the childcare proceedings. In accordance with the placement plan and the ongoing observations made of the family, monitoring may reduce in intensity, cameras in the bedroom areas may be turned off, and time outside without staff support may be



actively encouraged. Any changes to the level of monitoring will be discussed and agreed in advance with the placing local authority.

- 4.9 Final Reports, addressing the Letter of Instruction, are produced by the Orchard House social workers, and include expert analysis from a range of contemporary sources as well as the documented history and interviews with relevant family members and professionals. Orchard House provides high-quality, social work led Parenting Assessments, informed by members of the multidisciplinary team, with clear and robust recommendations on how best to meet the future needs of the child.
- 4.10 Orchard House recognise the benefits of secure attachment between a child and their primary caregiver. Secure attachment promotes long-lasting psychological and emotional wellbeing as children develop and form relationships of their own. Because of the profound importance of this we provide specific education for parents about responding consistently to their child and encouraging them to undertake parenting tasks in a manner that builds and reinforces secure attachment and mutual affection.
- 4.11 All families receive both instant and planned feedback regularly on a 1:1 basis. Planned feedback may be verbal, pictorial, or written, in a format responsive to the learning needs of the parents, and is provided at a regularity most helpful for the family. Feedback discussions provide an opportunity for parents to reflect and discuss the gaps in their skills whilst also recognising and acknowledging their strengths.
- 4.12 Staff at Orchard House ensure that each family understands and receives appropriate information, and are mindful of the need for this information to be consistent. The staff use a variety of techniques to help parents learn new skills, this may include formal instruction, modelling actions and tasks, breaking tasks down into small chunks, and providing numerous opportunities for rehearsal and repetition. In some cases we encourage parents to watch themselves interact with their child through the recordings taken from CCTV monitoring to help develop their understanding of their interactional style. Orchard House staff always seek to positively reinforce appropriate behaviour whilst actively motivating and encouraging parents to learn.
- 4.13 From within the experienced multidisciplinary team, Orchard House can provide assessment, formulation, and intervention for a range of psychological and emotional difficulties for both parents and children as required. The therapeutic models and orientations employed vary to best fit the presenting difficulties, though may include attachment theory, cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), dialectical behaviour therapy skills (DBT), eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), and emotion-based counselling. Orchard House therapists are all practicing clinicians who are committed to providing evidence-based psychotherapeutic interventions, and utilise the latest NICE guidelines (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) to inform decision-making and treatment choice.
- 4.14 Domestic abuse, relationship power imbalances, and the impact on children are issues that we take very seriously. Staff experienced in both the 'Freedom Programme', 'Caring Dads', and the Women's Aid 'Power to Change' programme offer individual



sessions to parents, hoping that increased recognition enables parents to make healthier decisions and to seek safer relationships for themselves and their children.

# 5 Advice, Guidance and Counselling, and Supervision

- 5.1 Staff at Orchard House are trained to help parents develop their parenting capacity and to guide and support them in responding to their children in an appropriate way. This includes providing information that is developmentally and age-appropriate for their child, particularly with regards to basic care needs such as feeding, hygiene, stimulation, and cognitive / emotional development.
- A number of appropriate and well-validated resources are used to support parents such as the Parenting Skill Cards (McGaw et al, 1999), Parenting Booklets (McGaw, 1994) and CHANGE parenting books (2008). These resources are based on research evidence and are designed to help parents develop skills. The resources that we use include a strong emphasis on the attachment between parent and child.
- Orchard House staff can remain involved supporting and assessing families during transition back to the community. This ensures continuity of care and the sharing of relevant information to those community services that continue to work with the family. Families are provided with a 24-hour helpline number, where support and signposting can be accessed. Urgent information is immediately passed to Safeguarding on-call to respond appropriately. Any non-urgent information is passed on to the Orchard House social worker for follow up.
- At Orchard House we recognise that parents undertaking an assessment often present with a range of complex social and psychological needs, for example some parents may have a history of childhood neglect and abuse themselves, they may have experienced abusive relationships, have a forensic history, chronic mental health needs, or they may have struggled with drug or alcohol dependence or addiction. Parents at Orchard House often have low self-esteem, poor self-efficacy, and some have difficulties with social skills. The staff take a non-judgmental approach in working with all parents and aim to identify parents' strengths, build confidence, and promote a sense of control during the assessment process. Staff take the time to listen and empathise, and endeavour to help parents access the appropriate resources (e.g. therapists, domestic violence support, or Somerset Drug and Alcohol, Service).
- 5.5 Regular supervision is highly-valued and a requirement for all FSWs, social workers, and clinical staff. Written records of supervision are filed with personnel.
- 5.6 Staff Meetings are open to all to discuss and reflect on a range of issues including, for example, the impact of families and their children on staff group dynamics. Professionally qualified staff are also encouraged to meet for discipline-specific peer supervision and Continuing Professional Development. 'Reflective Groups' are also convened when requested by staff or considered to be helpful.



5.7 Annual staff appraisals provide positive feedback about an employee's work, discuss areas for improvement, and create an action plan with an associated timetable for completion. Appraisals are recorded in confidential personnel files.

## 6 Facilities and Services Provided

- Orchard House Greenway Road is situated in Taunton, Somerset. Taunton is a large county town between Bristol and Exeter that is easily accessible from the M5/A38 and the A303. The train station is also only a short taxi ride away.
- Orchard House Greenway Road provides a high standard of facilities for up to five families. We maintain a practical, modern, homely environment where the decoration and the facilities are appropriate for young families. Each family is provided with a light and airy bedroom and all of the rooms have en-suite facilities.
- 6.3 Within the communal areas of this beautiful Victorian home where high ceilings and large windows bring large amounts of light, we have a generous living area with comfy sofas and a large flat-screen television and DVD player. We have a selection of DVDs, games, and game consoles for parents for relaxation when their children are asleep. This room also has tables, chairs, and high chairs so that families can eat together with their children as they may at home.
- 6.4 In the garden we have a 'buggy shed' that enables parents to keep their buggies and other equipment accessible and dry. We have found that this is very useful and keeps communal areas clear and safe.
- Orchard House has a fully equipped kitchen for families to prepare meals, and a separate utility room, for parents to wash and dry their clothes and where cleaning products are kept safely away from children. Following feedback from parents we have improved the laundry facilities by adding an additional washing machine and dryer.
- The Orchard House Community House, located a short walk from Middleway, provides an invaluable resource where it is appropriate and necessary to promote and reinforce independent living. The Community House is also used to provide a flexible space where families can parent in a non-shared living environment, or as 'step-down' accommodation for families whose assessments are progressing into the community. CCTV is not used in this accommodation but children and families are regularly monitored by scheduled and unscheduled staff visits. The Orchard House social workers continue to monitor progress and to meet any continuing need for assessment. Parents can also access staff support and help by telephone 24/7.
- 6.7 During their assessment at Orchard House families will become familiar with Canon Lodge. Canon Lodge was developed to provide a dedicated space for meetings between parents and professionals, and for therapy and other forms of intervention. We have found that having this separate space allows Middleway and Greenway Road to remain as 'homely' as possible. In addition to meeting rooms, Canon Lodge also has a fully equipped Playroom / Contact Room. This valuable resource is used for



contact between family members and workshops such as PEEP. The room has full CCTV and is split into different zones, catering for children of different ages.

- 6.8 Leslie Avenue Park is a three-minute walk from Orchard House Greenway Road. It provides a large green and a range of play equipment for all ages, including a sand pit. French Weir Park is also within walking distance, which provides a large open space and separate play areas for young children. There is also a river where children can feed the ducks and watch the wildlife. Many of the families very much enjoy this space and we ensure families are able to enjoy this area as soon as possible.
- 6.9 Families benefit from the local amenities found in the town centre. Within walking distance there is a library, a swimming pool, community baby and toddler groups, and various shops and markets. Locally, family attractions include soft play areas, a cinema, a bowling alley, and a sports centre / gym.
- Orchard House recognises that the families we work with often present with complex needs and require a comprehensive service that provides them with opportunities to develop skills not just as a parent but also in terms of more general daily living skills.
- 6.11 All families placed at Orchard House benefit from comprehensive social work assessments led by experienced social workers, with the support of multidisciplinary professionals available when required. Jon Parish (Registered Manager & Operations Director) and Dr Freda Gardner (Consultant Clinical Psychologist & Director of Services) lead and support a highly professional multi-disciplinary team to meet the complex assessment needs of the families we work with. A team of experienced social workers provide the day-to-day expertise. In addition, a team of psychologists and allied health professionals are able to provide mental health, drug and alcohol, and therapeutic intervention and support as necessary. Our team also has links with the NHS and other community services, and we always ensure that parents have access to all the community support that they would have at home and their community.
- At Orchard House we have a well-developed Workshop Programme. Workshops are structured sessions, delivered either individually or in small groups, which are focussed on skills and knowledge development. Clear learning outcomes are identified for each workshop, generally covering childcare and child development topics, and are designed and provided by staff experienced in these areas. Orchard House provide a programme of workshops available to all parents, accessed either at the request of the assessing social worker or by parent self-referral.
- Workshops such as 'Developmental Milestones', 'Why Love Matters', and 'Internet Safety' aim to develop parents' knowledge and understanding of a wide range of children's needs including child development, the importance of attachment and good parent-child bonding nutrition, routine, hygiene, the importance of self-care, and healthy relationships. We also offer practical skills workshops, including cooking, cleaning, and budgeting. Specialist programmes including anxiety management, self-esteem, anger management, stress and relaxation, and assertiveness are available for parents as necessary.



- 6.14 The Assessment Team undertakes a viability assessment based on documented evidence provided by Children's Social Care or other legal parties as part of the Public Law Outline process or once Care Proceedings have been issued. This determines the suitability of the family for assessment at Orchard House in terms of meeting the needs of both the family and the referrer, and the potential impact on existing assessments. Fundamentally, placement decisions at Orchard House are made only if it is deemed to be in the best interests of the child.
- 6.15 We operate a non-discriminatory policy and accept parents from all backgrounds, irrespective of race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, sex, or gender. At Greenway Road we have a ground floor bedroom which may be used for families who have difficulty using stairs or other mobility issues. We carefully consider the specific needs of each family (including any mobility needs), and whether we can meet these needs pre admission. We may consider a pre admission visit to the house to discuss any concerns.
- 6.16 Staff aim to be sensitive to the needs of all families, including specific cultural or religious needs. The Assessment Team and Family Support Workers are rigorous in their efforts to understand the meanings of cultural practice and ensure that assumptions about individual cultures do not impact on their ability to appropriately assess parenting skills. Orchard House staff are acutely aware that culture can refer to a wide range of characteristics including language, religion, cuisine, social habits, and more. Where necessary, staff at Orchard House endeavour to consult with specific cultural communities and experts to avoid simplified or idealised accounts of traditional practice and avoid cultural assumptions particularly in relation to parenting practises.
- 6.17 We recognise that some families require specialist assessment and support due to longstanding mental health difficulties, personality disorders, or may have survived trauma or been victims of abuse. Our highly experienced clinical psychologists work alongside the assessing social worker to ensure that such matters are appropriately considered when assessing long term parenting. In such cases an assessment may be made of a parent's readiness to change, responsiveness to treatment, and their existing coping skills.
- 6.18 For parents with a history of substance misuse and addiction, our staff recognise that it will be necessary to look at a range of parenting behaviours that may be impacted on by substance misuse, including the day-to-day child care, the nature and extent of the substance misuse, and any accompanying interpersonal problems and social difficulties. We can also assess the parental motivation to engage in intervention and gauge treatment compliance and safety behaviours. There is recognition that parents need to address their alcohol and drug addictions and, as such, we support parents involved in detoxification programmes, relapse prevention programmes, and drug counselling alongside the parenting assessment.
- 6.19 A Planning Meeting is held on the day of admission, or as soon as reasonably possible, attended by the Local Authority social worker. A placement plan will be agreed by all parties, including the expected length of the assessment and review



dates. We work in partnership with the parents and other relevant agencies. Reviews can be brought forward to respond to changes in the planned assessment. Any specific requirements for contact with other children and other arrangements will also be agreed at this stage. Typically, residential assessments last 8-12 weeks, and all are regularly reviewed to minimise drift.

- 6.20 The family focus will be reviewed at least once per week within a Weekly Progress Meeting. During this meeting the Weekly Progress Summary is shared and discussed with the family, and later these are provided to all parties. Orchard House operate a transparent service to all parents and professionals involved we encourage and support parents to read and respond to weekly feedback and to actively engage in the Weekly Progress Meetings. We discuss the content of reports and ensure that parents have access to their own information files.
- 6.21 Summary of Placement Reports are produced for all parties for discussion at external review meetings and are clearly presented to parents to ensure understanding and to allow them to discuss any queries with staff or with their legal representatives.
- 6.22 The Summary of Placement Report considers the placement progress and makes recommendations for the next period of assessment. A final external Review Meeting is held in the last week to discuss any further recommendations, and to make a safe and appropriate exit-plan to ensure smooth transition.
- 6.23 We support parents from the initial stages of the assessment through to the completion of the placement to safe and appropriate exit-planning, to include transition back to the community, where appropriate. An experienced Orchard House social worker is allocated to each family to lead the assessment throughout, providing expertise and guidance to the wider staff team, ensuring continuity of care, and having overall responsibility for the smooth running of the assessment. They have an in-depth knowledge of the family in terms of the progress of the assessment and collate the evidence of parenting abilities in order to produce a comprehensive, independent, and objective parenting report, tailored to the aims of the assessment. The Orchard House social worker also attends meetings relevant to the assessment, liaises with external agencies as required, completes a final report including a response to the Letter of Instructions, and attends Public Law Outline Meetings and Court if required.
- Our centre is fully staffed 24/7 to ensure that every child is looked after safely and their needs remain paramount throughout the assessment process. We aim to identify risk factors and ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to safeguard each child's wellbeing. This is done through non-invasive CCTV recording in all communal areas of the house and in the bedroom areas if there is a significant risk. This allows family life to continue without the constant presence of a staff member where possible. A senior member of the Assessment Team is on call 24-hours a day.



## 7 Name and Address of the Registered Manager

Jonathan Parish is the Registered Manager for Orchard House Family Assessment Centre Greenway Road, and the registered address is Orchard House Family Assessment Centre Ltd, 184 Greenway Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 6LH, Tel: 01823 351785, Fax: 01823 288100.

## 8 Qualifications and Experience of the Registered Manager

- B.1 Jonathan Parish, BSc (Hons), MSc (Hons) is Registered Manager and Operations Director. He holds undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in psychology, including the clinical and academic components of the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of Oxford in 2011. During training Jon completed a specialist clinical placement with an NHS Family Assessment and Safeguarding Service, which provided evidence-based interventions and community-based parenting assessments for the Family Courts. Jon has experience of assessment and intervention work in both adult and child mental health, as well as working with individuals with learning difficulties and undertaking risk assessments. Jon joined Orchard House in 2011, and has held various roles throughout the organisation over the past 10-years. Alongside the strategic management aspects of his role, Jon maintains a small clinical caseload, and has completed a CMI-approved Level 7 Certificate in Strategic Management & Leadership with assignments specifically tailored towards residential family centres.
- As Registered Manager, Jon has formal responsibility for safeguarding though Orchard House recognises that child protection is 'Everybody's Business'. Jon makes all staff aware of their individual responsibility to safeguard children and ensures that the induction of new staff covers the Orchard House Safeguarding Children Policy. In the event of an allegation or suspicion of abuse or malpractice within the centre, the Registered Manager will ensure that the correct safeguarding procedures are followed with the inclusion of any necessary professionals.

# 9 The Staff Team & Organisational Structure

- 9.1 Orchard House highly values multidisciplinary working and believes passionately that robust and evidence-based decisions are best made within a culture of open, critical, and reflective thinking. To this end a number of professionals across the MDT contribute to the social work led Residential Parenting Assessments.
- 9.2 **Dr Freda Gardner**, BA (Hons), MPhil PhD C.Psychol. Dr Gardner is the Director of Services of Orchard House and is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist. Dr Gardner qualified in 1989 from the University of Edinburgh and worked at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuroscience in Bangalore India and the University of Cambridge. She completed a PhD thesis on parent-child interaction in 1993, and was appointed as Senior Lecturer and Consultant Clinical Psychologist at the University of Bristol in 1993 where she provided a clinical service to patients at Bristol Royal Infirmary and Bristol Children's Hospital and conducted research on parent and child



interaction and abnormalities within interaction funded by the MRC, BHF and United Bristol Hospital's Special Trustees.

- 9.3 Dr Gardner has worked clinically with parents and children for over 30 years. She has worked directly in assessment and intervention combining clinical and theoretical experience. Dr Gardner has provided assessments for the courts in respect of childcare, attachment, assessment of parenting, and risk assessment since 2000. Dr Gardner has worked on many complex cases including NAI, FII and others. Dr Gardner also provides assessment, intervention, training, and supervision for the local NHS and other organisations.
- 9.4 In 2005 Dr Gardner opened Orchard House Family Assessment and Intervention Centre Middleway, then Greenway Road Family Assessment Centre in March 2010.
- 9.5 Dr Gardner is a member of Ofsted's National Consultative Forum for Social Care. Dr Gardner attends regular national meetings and contributes towards a range of current Ofsted projects including the inspection of Children's Homes, and quality assurance of adoption agencies.
- 9.6 **Dr Grace Alexander**, BSc (Hons), MSc (Hons), DClinPsy is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Clinical Director of Orchard House. She qualified in 2009 from Royal Holloway University of London having completed a specialist placement with the Fostering & Adoption Team at the Tavistock Clinic. She completed her doctoral thesis on observed parenting behaviours and their effect on child outcomes and specialises in assessments of attachment and child behaviour. Prior to clinical training, Dr Alexander worked as a researcher at the Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College London, evaluating the effects of parenting interventions on child anti-social behaviour. Since joining Orchard House in October 2009 Dr Alexander has worked directly in assessment and intervention combining clinical and theoretical experience. She provides comprehensive evidence-based assessments for court in respect of childcare / attachment, assessment of parenting, and risk assessment. Dr Alexander provides intervention and assessment for complex families and parents with learning difficulties, attachment difficulties, and other psychological and mental health difficulties.
- 9.7 The **Assessment Team** comprises highly qualified and experienced social workers and psychologists, who undertake extensive direct work with the children and families throughout the assessment process. Using a wide variety of practice experience and academic training, we work openly and collaboratively with families to identify relevant strengths and concerns, and to provide detailed analysis of current and potential parenting capacity.
- 9.8 The Assessment Team undertake thorough viability assessments, and provide support, direction, and consultation to the Family Support Workers.
- 9.9 **Consultant Social Workers** Orchard House has an experienced team of consultant social workers who bring a variety of different skill sets to the team and who provide comprehensive assessments of families. Each family is allocated a lead social worker



upon admission. The Assessment Team are highly experienced in working with parents from a wide range of backgrounds, with different needs including mental health, learning disability / difficulty, autistic spectrum presentations, and other needs. We prepare robust evidence-based Court Reports and act as independent experts for local authorities within Public Law Outline cases and in child care proceedings.

- 9.10 **Paul Hart** (Director) has more than 35 years' experience in business and finance and has always focused on providing effective business support and solutions within a caring and values based environment. He has been involved in Orchard House in senior management roles since its inception and has recently stepped down as Managing Director. He remains fully committed to the service, supporting his successor, and focusing on projects and development.
- 9.11 **Sophie Pinder** is the Manging Director. She joined the company in 2023 and has six years' experience of working in an MD role and over 18 years' experience in strategic business planning and business development. Sophie has a background of marketing, client services, project management and business development. With a Social Sciences Degree (BA Hons) she also has a comprehensive understanding of psychotherapy and counselling. Sophie possesses a highly developed understanding of people management and is trained to Level 3 CMI Coaching & Mentoring, is IOSH qualified and conversant in HR and employment law. She is committed to business development and working in support of the legislation and governance of family assessments.
- 9.12 **Carol Turner** is the Finance Director. She joined the company in 2004 as a Finance Assistant and progressed to Management Accountant whilst studying for her ACCA qualification. She qualified as a Certified Accountant in 2015 and was appointed Finance Director in January 2020. Carol supervises all the financial aspects of the business, including responsibility for payroll, vat reporting, management accounts, and many other financial and regulatory obligations. Her experience and close knowledge of the organisation also allows her to make a wider contribution to the business.
- 9.13 **Rachael Marshall** joined Orchard House in July 2009 as the Business Manager. She has an LLB (Hons) degree in Law and her special interests as an undergraduate were family and employment law. Rachael works closely as part of the Management Team, with a very broad remit playing a key role in the day-to-day management of the organisation and in all aspects of service and business development.
- 9.14 Health and safety responsibilities are shared between the Estates Manager, Business Manager, Business Coordinator, and HR Team, to ensure all aspects of the business are fully compliant. All staff receive an introduction to Health and Safety as part of their induction, including training in Manual Handling and Fire Safety. The Estates Manager ensures that all necessary electrical devices are regularly PAT tested, and ensures that Orchard House is COSHH and RIDDOR compliant. Tailored risk assessments are conducted for both staff (e.g. maternity risk assessments) and property and that the risk related policies and procedures are fully implemented and regularly reviewed.



- 9.15 Bryony Forgan is the HR and Project Manager and has worked at Orchard House for over 10 years in various positions. She started her career at Orchard House as a Family Support Worker in 2008 following the completion of her BSc (Hons) in Psychology. Bryony then progressed to become a Senior Clinical Assistant as part of the psychology team and in 2013 moved over to work as part of the business administration team. Her extensive experience within different roles, alongside her understanding of the day-to-day management of the houses compliments the business administration team and benefits her role in managing HR. She is dedicated to supporting families by recruiting suitable, safe, and committed staff and providing them with the right support and training. Bryony is also committed to trying to improve staff welfare as she understands and appreciates the intensity of the work that we do.
- 9.16 Orchard House ensures that all aspects of recruitment job advertising, shortlisting, interviewing, appointing, references are undertaken in line with 'Safer Recruitment' policies and principles. Various senior managers are 'Safer Recruitment' trained by Somerset Safeguarding Children Board, and this is refreshed periodically.
- 9.17 Orchard House is aware of and compliant with GDPR and other relevant data protection legislation.
- 9.18 **Sharon Grindle** is a hugely experienced professional having worked at Orchard House for over 12-years in various roles, most recently leading the House Management Team providing key day-to-day leadership and support in the houses. Prior to joining Orchard House, Sharon spent eight-years working on NHS hospital wards, three-years in a pre-school, and seven-years as a House Parent at a boarding school. Sharon has achieved a Level 3 Diploma in Leadership & Management Skills, and has attended various training relevant to her role, including for example mental health first aid to support the wellbeing of both families and the wider team.
- 9.19 **Team Leaders** work closely with the Assessment and Support Teams and make a significant contribution to the leadership of the staff team to ensure professional and effective service delivery to families during their assessment at Orchard House. The Team Leader carries out all tasks to the highest standards in accordance with The Children Act (1989, 2004), The Residential Family Centres Regulations (2002), The Residential Family Centres Regulations (2013), The National Minimum Standards for Residential Family Centres (2013), and the Policies and Procedures in place at Orchard House. Team Leaders also ensure that tailored risk assessments (e.g. around swimming, managing complex medication regimes...) are conducted regarding families during their assessment.
- 9.20 **Parenting Intervention Workers** With significant experience supporting children and families in various social care and educational settings, they deliver evidence-based programmes such as Circle of Security groups, PEEP (Parents Early Education Partnership), and Triple P 'Positive Parenting Programme'.
- 9.21 **Family Support Workers** Orchard House has a dedicated team of experienced Family Support Workers (FSWs). All staff have been recruited and selected for the



range of complementary skills that they bring to the centre. They are trained to observe parents' interactions with their children and record objective details on Assessment Forms. FSWs come from a wide variety of backgrounds, including nursery workers, qualified nurses and social workers, hospital and health-based care assistants, teaching staff, residential children's centre staff, and workers with experience of working with individuals with learning difficulties and various complex medical or mental health needs.

- 9.22 We place a strong emphasis on supporting our staff to help them understand the difficulties experienced by children and their parents, including the challenges families face being closely supported and monitored during the assessment. Our staff are skilled listeners and aim to establish collaborative and trusting relationships with families, encouraging and supporting them through the process of assessment. We recognise the need to assist and empower families, offering them the best opportunity to demonstrate their capacity to parent their child.
- 9.23 All Orchard House FSWs are qualified to NVQ Level 3 (or equivalent) or are enrolled on an appropriate course once successfully passing their six-month probationary period. FSWs are actively encouraged and supported in undertaking further professional development qualifications, and have the opportunity to attend a range of internal training to continue that learning.

#### 10 Safer recruitment

- 10.1 At Orchard House we are committed to following a consistent and thorough process of safer recruitment in order to ensure that people who are not suitable to work with children and vulnerable adults are prevented from doing so.
- 10.2 Safer recruitment trained staff are involved in the recruitment of all staff and our approach to safeguarding is regularly discussed and reviewed to ensure that the highest standard of safer recruitment practice is maintained.
- 10.3 We are also committed to providing a fair and equality based recruitment process.

## 11 Fees and Charges

- 11.1 Orchard House provides a comprehensive assessment service, which can include specialist assessments meeting the needs of individual families. These include the social work led Residential Parenting Assessments, Psychological Assessments, specialist Risk Assessments, Psychiatric Assessments, Capacity Assessments, and Paediatric Assessments. Orchard House is dedicated to providing comprehensive and robust assessments for the Court that are both timely and cost-effective.
- 11.2 **Viability Assessments** Viability Assessments, prepared from Court documents by a member of The Assessment Team, are undertaken on instruction from solicitors. Brief reports are without cost, though a small charge is made where face-to-face assessment or Court attendance is required.



- 11.3 Residential Parenting Assessments Orchard House provides different levels of monitoring during an assessment. We work flexibly and creatively with families, to minimise intrusion whilst ensuring safeguarding and informing the assessment. Families are provided with robust support during their assessment, which varies depending on their specific needs and abilities, with a view to reducing as the assessment progresses.
- 11.4 The specific nature and format of the support / monitoring is decided by the Orchard House social worker in liaison with the LA social worker, and the Guardian. The decision is informed by the Referral / Risk Assessment Forms and other information made available to us, and communicated to the LA Commissioning Team. All support and monitoring is tailored to the specific needs of the individual family, though the following two categories are used for commissioning purposes.
  - Intensive Assessment Orchard House recognises that Intensive Assessment
    is required in some cases (e.g. where risk is either unknown or there is an
    identified risk of harm, where compensatory parenting is required, or to support
    transition into the assessment). Intensive Assessments can include a variety of
    staff input; this might include direct in-person or real-time CCTV monitoring, or
    significant input at specific times (e.g. bath time, mealtimes, during a specific play
    session, bottle making) from a dedicated Family Support Worker. This can also
    include intensive evidence-based psychological interventions.
  - Standard Assessment A Standard Assessment allows families to have greater independence to demonstrate their parenting skills it is our aim to progress all families to this level as soon as possible. Families may initially start on this level where parents demonstrate consistently strong basic care and identified risks are known to be low. Family Support Workers are still available 24/7 to provide families with the necessary support and appropriate monitoring. Families spend longer periods of time without the need for direct input, though support for specifically identified parenting tasks can still be provided. Support / Monitoring of each family is not necessarily continuous, though recordings can be played back and footage retained as above.
- 11.5 Invoices Invoices are sent monthly and are payable within 30-days. All residential costs are clearly communicated with the placing authority commissioners by way of a Commissioning Letter that acts as the Financial Agreement sent following the Planning Meeting. Subsequent changes in monitoring (reduced or increased) and associated cost amendments are discussed in liaison with the LA social workers and are clearly communicated with the placing authority through an updated Commissioning Letter.
- 11.6 Residential Assessment fees include all workshops, the preparation of Weekly Progress Summaries, Summary of Placement Reports, a Final Parenting Report, and attendance at professional meetings in Taunton.



- 11.7 Temporary loans to families can be provided if agreed in advance with the local authority. Loans provided in an emergency (to ensure safe / adequate care of a child) need to be refunded by the placing local authority.
- 11.8 Food and travel costs for families are not included.
- 11.9 Additional Services
- 11.10 Mental Health Support A specialist package of intensive psychiatric / mental health support can be provided by experienced health professionals such as Clinical Psychologists. The cost of this service is agreed in advance based on the specific needs of the family.
- 11.11 **Drug / Alcohol Testing** can be provided. No charge is made if such testing is infrequent, though a fee will be payable if multiple testing is required.
- 11.12 **Supervision of Contact** Supervision of contact at Orchard House is often without charge, though a fee is payable where supervision of contact is elsewhere.
- 11.13 **Childcare** If a parent attends Court or a meeting a small cost for childcare may be levied. This charge will not be made if the family are on intensive support / monitoring.
- 11.14 **Professional Time** All fees for professional time, (e.g. Court attendance, meetings away from Orchard House, preparation for Court) are charged based upon the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) guidelines for remuneration.
- 11.15 **Community-Based Assessments** Orchard House has the benefit of a community base where families can be assessed either independently from the shared living Family Assessment Centres, or as a 'step-down' option as the assessment progresses. Fees are agreed in advance with the placing authority and reflect the intensity of support and assessment required to meet the individual needs of a family.
- 11.16 Psychological Assessments and other Specialist Assessments Clinical Psychologists at Orchard House are able to undertake Psychological Assessments and specialist Risk Assessments, for example relating to violence and aggression, domestic violence, and children displaying sexually harmful behaviours. Cognitive Assessments and Capacity Assessments (e.g. 'Capacity to Instruct a Solicitor') can also be provided from within the Orchard House multidisciplinary team. Reports can typically be provided within eight-weeks of receiving the letter of instruction.
- 11.17 All hourly fees are in line with the latest LAA Guidelines. Specific costs are provided following receipt of the letter of instruction. Fees are subject to VAT and are invoiced by Healthcare South West Ltd. The following examples are for information only:
  - Psychological / Risk Assessment of 1x Adult / Child (typically < 25hrs)</li>
  - Psychological / Risk Assessment of 2x Adults / Children (typically < 35hrs)</li>
  - Cognitive Assessment and Report (no more than 10hrs)
  - Capacity to Instruct Assessment and Report (no more than 12hrs)



#### 12 Admission Criteria

- 12.1 Orchard House welcome referrals from all agencies, particularly where there is potential for family breakdown and risk of significant harm. A member of The Assessment Team considers each referral and, if a residential assessment is in the interests of the child, careful consideration is given as to how to best meet the assessment needs of the family whilst simultaneously minimising any potential disruption both for the child and the families already in the assessment centre. This ensures that we provide each family with the optimum opportunity to demonstrate their parenting abilities and learn new skills in a safe, friendly, and supportive environment.
- 12.2 There are no age restrictions for parents, carers, or children, and we do not discriminate on any basis, for example, of race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, sex, or gender. We have expertise in working with parents from a wide range of backgrounds and presenting concerns, including:
  - Both mothers and fathers, either separately or together
  - Families where abuse or maltreatment is alleged, suspected, or confirmed
  - Parents who are considered to pose a risk to children
  - Expectant mothers
  - Parents with mental health problems
  - Parents who have a Learning Disability / significant learning difficulties
  - Parents with histories of being exposed to abuse and maltreatment
  - Parents who have been placed in care in their own childhoods
  - Vulnerable, young, and teenage parents
  - Parents who misuse alcohol and / or substances
  - Parents where domestic violence is present / suspected
  - Families in which English is not the first language
  - Families who have difficulty using stairs or other mobility issues
  - Families with alleged, suspected, or confirmed fabricated or induced illness
- 12.3 Referrals are carefully considered in terms of the facts of the specific case and the relevant evolving empirical literature. The wellbeing of the child is paramount, and assessments are only recommended if it is deemed to be in the child's best interests.

#### 13 Assessment of risk

13.1 Before a family come to Orchard House, we complete a Pre-Admission Risk Assessment form. This is in addition to individual risk assessments of the parents. The form is completed alongside the Local Authority social worker and assesses any risks that the family may pose to themselves, or others already living at Orchard House and how the risks can be mitigated.

## 14 Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures

14.1 Staff are trained in safeguarding and in the implementation of the Orchard House Policy for Child Protection, which is written and followed in accordance with the Page 19 of 24



Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) and the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2022) guidelines. SSCP-approved child protection training is delivered to all members of the team.

- 14.2 Staff are alert to any behaviour which may undermine the wellbeing of a child / young person and will take appropriate and immediate action if required. Staff are aware of their duty towards child protection and are encouraged to discuss any safeguarding concerns with a consultant social worker or member of the Management Team.
- 14.3 If anyone suspects any abuse or becomes aware of an allegation of abuse in relation to any member of staff or the Responsible Individual, they should report this immediately to the Somerset Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on 0300 123 2224. The following agencies may also be contacted:
  - Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD. Tel: 0300 123 1231
  - Children's Commissioner for England, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT, Tel: 020 7783 8330.
  - Help at Hand (Children's Commissioner's advice and assistant service) can be contacted for free by phone on 0800 528 0731
  - Somerset Local Authority Emergency Duty Team. Tel: 0300 123 2327
  - A Police Officer
  - The NSPCC. Tel: 0808 800 5000. http://www.nspcc.org.uk
- 14.4 All incidents of suspected child abuse are fully investigated and recorded in line with local SSCP guidelines and best practice. All relevant parties will be notified of the appropriate action taken.
- 14.5 Orchard House are committed to high standards of child protection. If we find that we have differing views with other professionals on the best course of action to safeguard a child effectively, then we will refer to the SSCP Protocol for Resolving Professional Differences in Work Relating to the Safety of Children.

## 15 Respect for Privacy, Dignity, and Confidentiality

- 15.1 Everyone has the right to privacy and dignity. Whilst appreciating the often complex situations that lead to a family being placed at Orchard House, we encourage children and parents to view Orchard House as 'home' during their placement. Through our ethos and practice, we aim to empower parents and families, and we respect and promote an individual's right to make informed choices about their lifestyle.
- 15.2 For some parents the child protection risk may be so significant that constant monitoring is necessary to safeguard a child. In these circumstances our staff use close supervision to observe children and monitor parental behaviour. Parents are fully informed of all monitoring arrangements and any amendments throughout the assessment. Orchard House is committed to reduce the level of monitoring to the least intrusive level possible whilst ensuring safeguarding these decisions are tailored to reflect each family's individual circumstances, and are reviewed regularly.



- 15.3 We understand the importance of privacy, so we have developed Orchard House Family Services Canon Lodge (which is a short walk away from both houses) where all the meetings take place. Families also have workshops and therapy there, which helps children and parents feel like the houses are as near to being 'home' as possible and provides private space to discuss sensitive information. All families have the right to confidentiality insofar as possible. However, information will need to be shared with the placing authority and other agencies in order for professionals to work together.
- All families have the right to confidentiality insofar as is possible whilst ensuring safeguarding. Families at Orchard House are informed of the limits of confidentiality and it is made clear that although Orchard House is an independent service, all safeguarding concerns must be shared with other parties including the placing authority and other relevant agencies. Privacy and confidentiality is explained to all parents on admission, setting out the principals governing the sharing of information. All staff read this during their induction, and privacy and confidentiality are regular themes of discussion at Team Meetings and in supervision.

# 16 Complaints Procedure

- Orchard House continually strives to maintain and surpass the high standards deserved by the children and families that use our service, and the high standards we set ourselves. However, in the event that a parent wishes to complain they are encouraged in the first instance to report their concern to either the Team Leader or the Registered Manager. The complaint will be acknowledged within 24-hours and a parent will receive a written response within seven days. All complaints are taken very seriously. If, for any reason, a parent is not satisfied with the response received they are encouraged to raise their concerns with Dr Gardner as Responsible Individual.
- 16.2 If a parent or child, remains unhappy that their concern has not been dealt with satisfactorily, they are urged to raise their concern with Ofsted: Tel: 0300 123 4666, <a href="https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints">https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints</a>. Alternatively they can contact the Children's Commissioner for England, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT, Tel: 02077 838330.
- 16.3 Parents are provided with a copy of the Complaints Policy. This is included in the 'Welcome Pack' given to all families and explained on arrival. Parents who may experience difficulties in completing forms or in written communication are encouraged to seek help in doing so from any member of staff with whom they have a good relationship. Parents are also encouraged to seek advice and support from their solicitor or an independent advocate to discuss any concerns that may arise. Families are informed of the local advocacy services 'Swan Advocacy' who can be contacted at their Access Hub Hi Point, Thomas Street, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 6HB Tel: 03333 447928.



#### 17 Rules for families

- 17.1 Every family assessed at Orchard House will have different needs and circumstances. The following conditions are standard for all families, though other circumstances may be discussed in the Placement Planning Meeting on admission.
- 17.2 The Placement Planning Meeting will confirm that whilst a wide range of support will be available to all families during their assessment, wherever possible it remains the responsibility of the parent(s) to provide full care to their child. Where it may be necessary for staff to provide babysitting or care for extended time periods (e.g. sole parent is hospitalised) then we would inform and agree an exigent plan with the placing LA and update Ofsted.
  - Illicit drugs and alcohol are not permitted at Orchard House.
  - No smacking or other physical chastisement. Alternative appropriate strategies will be explored with individual families.
  - No smoking inside Orchard House. Smoking is permitted in the garden area.
  - Music / loud noise should be kept to a minimum for the benefit of other families.
  - No chip pans or candles are allowed at Orchard House due to the fire risks.
  - Violence, intimidation, bullying, or anti-social behaviour are not tolerated.
  - Families are encouraged to make their room feel 'their own', though permanent alteration to the room decor is forbidden. Rooms should be kept to a reasonable standard and any breakages will have to be contributed towards.
  - No pets allowed.

## 18 Drug and Alcohol Policy

Orchard House does not permit the use of alcohol or non-prescription drugs during the residential assessment. If significant concerns arise with regard to use / misuse the placing authority and the children's guardian will be informed. In this situation an External Review Meeting may be convened to discuss and agree a plan of action.

## 19 The ending of placements

- 19.1 All assessments are carefully planned, including the ending whereby we support the family in their transition home or to another setting, either together or separately.
- As an organisation we work hard to ensure robust transition planning and we work closely with the placing local authority do this, sometimes holding a transition meeting towards the end of a placement. Where required, we can assist local authorities in supporting parents to return home, so they can prepare it for a child, and planning the return of a family's belongings. We are also able to facilitate goodbye contacts and prepare information about a child and their routine, likes and dislikes for new carers.
- 19.3 We are aware that sometimes it is difficult for local authorities to find appropriate accommodation for families post-assessment at Orchard House. Where it is in the child's best interests we may consider extending a assessment by up to one week to



allow time for a smooth transition. The overriding principle that governs and guides any decision at Orchard House is that 'at all times, the child's welfare is paramount'.

- 19.4 If, after receiving clear feedback from staff and senior management, parents are unable to respond to advice or ignore or do not accept advice to address concerns, their placement may be at risk. Alternative courses of action will be thoroughly explored and significant attempts will be made to work alongside the family. If these efforts are unsuccessful the placement viability may be reconsidered to ensure it remains in the child's interests. Alongside close liaison with the placing authority and the children's guardian, we may consider that the best course of action is to end a placement.
- 19.5 Orchard House is committed to transparency and building close working relationships with families. All recommendations will be discussed with parents, unless doing so may place the child at risk of immediate danger or harm.

# 20 Fire Precautions and Emergency Procedures

- 20.1 Each family is given instructions on the fire procedures during their initial induction. Written and pictorial information is displayed within the centre including the bedroom areas, and is given to families on their arrival. The staff carry out regular evacuation drills shortly after new family members arrive at the centre.
- 20.2 Fire alarms, extinguishers, automatic doors, and emergency lighting are tested on a weekly basis, and further maintenance checks of the alarms and lighting are made by an approved engineer regularly. Fire training covering both theoretical and practical aspects is undertaken during the staff induction and refreshed regularly.
- 20.3 Where relevant, personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) are created to provide a bespoke plan for individuals who may not be able to reach a place of safety unaided or within a satisfactory time period. This applies to both families and staff alike and includes issues such as hearing impairment.
- 20.4 In the event of an emergency, one of the other Orchard House premises would be used either Orchard House Family Services (Canon Street) or The Lodge (Staplegrove Road) depending on which is most appropriate.

## 21 Conclusion

- 21.1 Orchard House is a service for children; the safety and the needs of the child are paramount.
- 21.2 Throughout the assessment we aim to achieve best practice by providing safe, appropriate, and robust assessments for families to achieve the best outcome for the child or children. We make every effort to have a full understanding of their experiences and difficulties. We provide parents with information, help, and support needed to ensure that they have every opportunity to develop their parenting capacity.



- 21.3 We are committed to being open and clear at all times to ensure that parents are fully informed of their strengths and of any concerns. We try very hard to ensure that the assessment process is, where possible, a positive experience for children and parents.
- 21.4 Staff at Orchard House are committed to improving our service. We welcome any suggestions or ideas from children, parents, staff, and other professionals to help us continue to improve our service If you are able to provide feedback to help us we would always be grateful (Tel: 01823 351785, feedback@orchardhousefac.co.uk).

Dr Freda Gardner Consultant Clinical Psychologist Responsible Individual Jon Parish Registered Manager Operations Director

**Orchard House Family Assessment and Intervention Centre** 

www.orchardhousefac.co.uk

Last Review Date: July 2023

Next Review Date: July 2024