



Guidance

Introduction to residential family centres

Updated 22 February 2021

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This guide defines what a residential family centre is and what you must do if you intend to open one.

This guide is specific to residential family centres and provides information that only applies to them. However, you must also read our main guide to registration, which applies to all children's social care services.

About residential family centres

A residential family centre is any establishment where:

- accommodation is provided for children and their parents
- the parents' capacity to respond to the children's needs and to safeguard their welfare is monitored or assessed
- the parents are given advice, guidance or counselling, as necessary

In this definition, 'parent' includes any person who is looking after a child. It may also offer services for parents aged under 18, who are therefore children themselves.

[The Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002, Regulation 3](#) sets out some types of accommodation that are not residential family centres and therefore do not have to register with us.

About registration

If you want to run a residential family centre, you must register with us under the Care Standards Act 2000 before you can open it. It is an offence to run a residential family centre without the appropriate registration. This helps to prevent unsuitable people from owning, operating, managing or working within residential family centres.

You must demonstrate how you meet a number of legal requirements, including those within the:

- Care Standards Act 2000
- The Care Standards Act 2000 (Registration)(England) Regulations 2010
- The Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002

You must also take account of the [residential family centres: national minimum standards](#).

If you want to register an establishment that offers places to parents and their children, you may have to register as a residential family centre or as a children's home, depending on some specific details.

When to register as a residential family centre

If you intend to provide accommodation for children with their parents and both of the following apply:

- the parents' capacity to respond to their children's needs and to safeguard and promote their children's welfare is monitored or assessed
- the parents are given advice, guidance or counselling

If you are already running a registered children's home

If you are already running a registered children's home, you may need to re-register as a residential family centre instead, if the primary purpose of any placement is to assess parenting skills.

If you run a children's home that accommodates a parent who is under 18 and their child and you contribute to another service's parenting assessment, you do not need to re-register as a residential family centre.

You must register as a children's home if you want to run an establishment that accommodates parents with their children and both of the following apply:

- you do not carry out parenting assessments with advice, guidance or counselling functions
- the majority of those that you accommodate (parents plus children) are under the age of 18

Finally, if your main purpose is to provide medical or psychiatric treatment for illness or mental disorder, or to provide palliative care, you may require registration with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). [Ofsted and CQC joint registration guidance: Children's homes and health care](#) provides separate guidance on this.

Before you apply

For your residential family centre, you will need:

- to appoint a manager
- a statement of purpose that sets out the overall aims and objectives for the residential family centre

If you are an organisation, such as a company, you will also need to appoint a person known as a 'responsible individual' who is not a registered person. They will represent the organisation to Ofsted. You do not need to appoint a responsible individual if you are a sole trader or partnership.

What to provide when you apply

You must submit an [SC1 application](#). As part of this, you must include:

- your details as the provider and, if you are an organisation such as a company, details of the responsible individual
- details of the manager(s)
- your statement of purpose
- your safeguarding policy
- accident and missing resident procedure
- your prevention of bullying policy
- your complaints procedure
- your equalities policy
- a copy of a certificate of insurance or written confirmation that insurance will be provided (for example, a letter of intention and an insurance quote)
- your resident's guide
- a copy of planning permission granted, a certificate of lawfulness, a copy of a planning application or evidence that planning permission is not required
- [a financial reference](#)
- your business plan
- your cash-flow forecast
- if applicable, your last 2 annual reports, including reports for any holding company and any subsidiaries
- if applicable, your last 2 annual accounts
- if applicable, your [charitable objects](#)
- if you are applying to register as a partnership, a copy of the agreement or a document that clearly establishes the partnership as a legal entity

Fees

You will need to pay an [application fee](#) for each registration.

Registration timescales

Once Ofsted has received everything necessary for your application to register, we usually make a decision within 47 days. We recommend that you allow at least 16 weeks from the start of your application before you intend to open. You cannot operate before you're registered.

After registration

You will receive a certificate of registration.

You need to pay an annual fee for each residential family centre you register. We will contact you when any fees are due.

What you need to tell us

You must [use the SC3 form](#) to tell us about any changes to registered managers.

You can find further information about [changes to registered children's social care services](#).

Conditions of registration

Conditions of registration restrict the services that your residential family centre is registered to provide.

After registration, you will receive a certificate that details the conditions of your registration. It is an offence to fail, without reasonable excuse, to comply with these. The [social care compliance handbook](#) sets out information about actions we may take if you do not follow your conditions.

We will always apply a condition that will stipulate the maximum number of families that we may accommodate at any one time. We may also apply other conditions as appropriate.

If we grant registration with conditions that you have not agreed, you may object by making a 'written representation' to us. For information on this, see the [social care compliance handbook](#).

Once registered, if you wish to provide other services, you will need to apply for a [variation to your conditions of registration](#).

Inspection

We inspect residential family centres as set out in the [social care common inspection framework](#).

Generally, we inspect new residential family centres within 12 months from registration, but it is important that we can make judgements about the quality of assessment and care provided. Therefore, wherever possible, the first inspection of a centre will wait until a family is living at the centre, as long as this means the centre can be inspected within the 3-year inspection window.

Complaints and concerns

We may receive complaints or concerns about a residential family centre. We will take these seriously and we may take actions as a result, as set out in our [guidance about social care concerns](#).

There is also guidance on how we respond to concerns in our [social care compliance handbook](#).

Compliance and enforcement

Our [social care compliance handbook](#) provides more information about what will happen if you do not meet the relevant regulations.

List of legislation

- [Care Standards Act 2000: legal definitions of all agencies and establishments we register](#)
- [The Care Standards Act 2000 \(Registration\)\(England\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills \(Fees and Frequency of Inspections\) \(Children's Homes etc.\) Regulations 2015](#)
- [The Care Standards Act 2000 \(Establishments and Agencies\) \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) Regulations 2002](#)
- [The Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002](#)
- [The Residential Family Centres \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

You should also take account of:

- [the national minimum standards for residential family centres](#)

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