



# LIGHTHOUSE

Family • Assessment • Service

## PARENT'S GUIDE



FERN LODGE



A beacon  
of hope  
supporting your  
parenting journey”

**We understand that an assessment centre is a new and daunting environment, but our professional and friendly staff are there to support you every step of the way.**

**This guide is the parents' version of the Centre's Statement of Purpose and has been written to help you to understand what to expect from our Centre.**

It explains:

- About our Centre
- About the Accommodation
- What you will be doing at the Centre
- How we expect you to behave during your stay at the Centre
- 'Rights, Responsibilities and Rules'
- How you can tell us what you think about us

Sometimes in this guide we use the word 'Fern Lodge' or 'Centre' and sometimes 'Lighthouse Family Assessment Service'. All these are referring to Fern Lodge.

If there's anything in here that you don't understand or you have a question that this guide doesn't answer, we're happy to answer it for you.



## **Accessibility and Translations**

This guide can be made available in large print, audio, or digital accessible format for parents who are visually impaired.

If English is not your first language, we can provide key information or summaries in other languages such as Polish, Romanian, Urdu, Punjabi, Arabic, Portuguese, Somali, and Bengali.

**Please let a member of staff know if you would like this guide in another format or language.**

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# 1. Welcome to Fern Lodge

**Fern Lodge is a bright, spacious, and welcoming Residential Family Centre designed for families and their babies.**

Here, you can stay together while receiving support through our 12–14-week programme, tailored to meet the unique needs of both parents and children. Fern Lodge is part of Lighthouse Family Assessment Service (Lighthouse FAS).

We support families experiencing a range of challenges that may affect parenting, including domestic abuse, mental health difficulties, alcohol or substance use, learning or physical disabilities, past experiences of neglect, or situations involving child exploitation or trafficking. Our caring team works with you respectfully and sensitively, always taking into account your cultural and religious needs.

**“ An assessment is a way of learning about your parenting skills and ability to safely care for your child.**

**Each family has different needs, but when we work with you our aim is to ensure we achieve the best outcome for your child.**

**Fern Lodge is located at 87 Seabrook Avenue, Hythe, CT21 5QP**, in a quiet, friendly neighbourhood in the seaside town of Hythe. The centre is a detached



property, offering six family bedrooms with ensuite showers, a family room for parents with a baby and toddler, and communal areas for daily living. Our goal is to create a safe, homely, and supportive environment where you and your children can feel cared for, valued, and supported every step of the way.

**“ It is our aim for each family to achieve and experience a fully functioning and positive family life in society. Whilst at Fern Lodge you are informed of what to expect from our service and how you will be cared for during their stay.**

**This guide seeks to ensure you know how the Centre operates prior to your admission.**

Fern Lodge is close to local amenities, making it easy for families to access everyday services and community facilities. Within a short walk or bus journey, families can

reach the town centre, which offers:

- Supermarkets and a variety of shops
- Banks and post office
- Health centre and pharmacy
- Library and children's centres
- Restaurants offering a wide range of cultural cuisines

The centre is also near a train station with links to London, which can be used by families to access wider services or activities further afield.

Fern Lodge provides a safe, supportive environment for families and their babies, with easy access to the local community and essential services.

## 2. What are Lighthouse FAS's Aims?

**We operate our Centre on the following principles:**

I. The safety and needs of the baby are paramount

II. The staff and policies of the home exist to serve, promote, enable and support the family to provide a high level of care to their baby

III. Religious persuasion, race, ethnicity, diversity, sexual orientation and cultural difference is respected and wherever possible, all efforts are made to have translators where needed

IV. At all times, best interest principle, evidence base practice and the quality and individual rights of the parents and their babies are promoted and maintained

V. We recognise that being at Fern Lodge will be, in most cases, the final opportunity for a family to stay together as a family and therefore aim to achieve this in all instances

VI. The family will be involved in all meetings and decision making relating to their stay in the home and care of their baby.

VII. Every placement admission will be documented, have a daily log recording which will be kept confidential and stored safely in accordance to GDPR guidance.

VIII. We identify with the definition of parental responsibility as outlined in the principles of the Children's Act 1989.



### 3. What are the facilities provided at Fern Lodge?

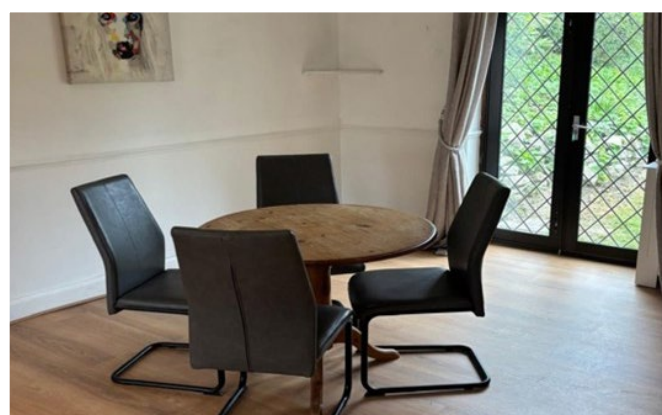
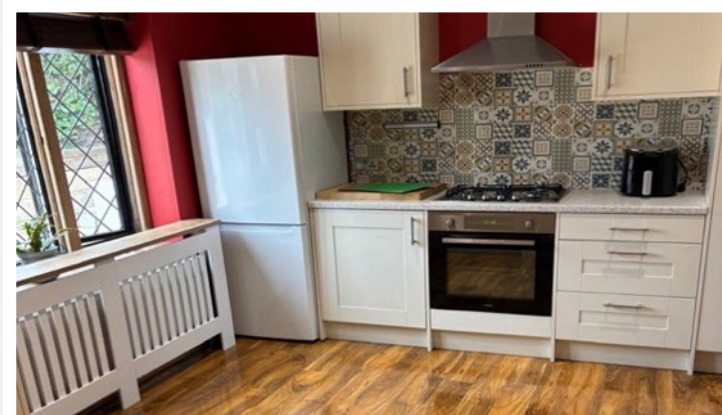
**Fern Lodge is a bright and spacious family centre designed with your family's comfort in mind.**

We have six thoughtfully furnished bedrooms, including a family room that can accommodate parents, a baby, and a toddler together. Every bedroom has its own ensuite shower, and there is also a communal bathroom with a bathtub, shower, and toilet—perfect for relaxing and family routines.



Communal areas and all bedrooms are monitored via CCTV. The cameras in bedrooms are positioned to capture the cot or sleeping area of the child or children to help monitor their safety. A Ring doorbell is also located at the entrance and exit points of the property for safety reasons. There are no cameras in bathrooms, and families are shown exactly what staff can see on the CCTV in their rooms.

There is a large kitchen-diner and a smaller kitchenette area within the Centre. Each family has an allocated cupboard space for storing their food and utensils, and there is adequate space for the preparation of meals.



A laundry room and an additional smaller laundry area are also available, both equipped with a washer and dryer for residents' use.

There is a comfortable living room with a play area and reading corner, for families and babies to spend time together, as well as a therapeutic room on the ground floor used for parenting assessments, group sessions, and supervised family contact. The Centre also has staff offices and a staff rest room.



Fern Lodge always maintains an emergency supply of nappies, baby formula, creams, and a limited amount of clothing for families who may need immediate support.





The centre has a large front and back garden, enclosed patio area, outdoor play area and a private car park.

Families are encouraged to bring their own personal belongings to help make their room feel comfortable and familiar. Parents are expected to provide the necessary equipment required for their child or children, including sterilisers (if needed), bottles, clothing, nappies, a pushchair, and a car seat. The Centre provides cots and cribs/Moses basket, although families may use their own if preferred. Families are also responsible for providing their own food and provisions throughout their stay.

Lighthouse Family Assessment Service provides a safe, secure and nurturing environment for vulnerable families irrespective of race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender or ethnic background, and with notice can make provision for families with disabilities or specific health need.



## 4. Who works at Fern Lodge?



**Fern Lodge is staffed by a dedicated team of suitably qualified, competent, and experienced professionals, including social workers and family assessment and support workers. Together, they provide guidance, supervision, and assessment throughout each family's stay.**

**Wedzerai Mukumba (Wedzi)** is a qualified Social Worker and the Registered Manager at Fern Lodge. She has over twenty years' experience working in children's social care.

A Deputy Centre Manager and Senior Team Leaders support the Registered Manager with the day-to-day running of the Centre and oversight of family assessments.

The team also includes Family Support Workers, who are fully trained and experienced in supporting parents and children. They work closely with each family, offering practical help, emotional support, and guidance as part of the parenting assessment process.

A typical day at Fern Lodge is supported by a team of up to six Family Assessment Workers. Staff are available throughout the day and night to ensure that families receive consistent care, supervision, and support whenever it is needed.

## 5. Once you have arrived

**When you arrive at Fern Lodge, a member of staff will welcome you, show you to your room, and help you unpack and settle in.**

You will be asked to hand in all medicines, cleaning products, and sharps (such as razors or scissors) to the Office. These items will be stored safely and returned to you as needed. You will be asked to sign them in and out each time they are used, to ensure everyone's safety and accountability.

A member of the staff team will then meet with you and your Social Worker to explain how the Centre works, what you can expect from us, and what we expect from you during your stay. You will be asked to sign an agreement confirming that you understand and agree to follow our policies and procedures.

During this meeting, we will also discuss the use of CCTV, baby monitors, emergency first aid, and information sharing, and you will be asked to sign the relevant consent forms.

A brief care plan will be completed, outlining the level of support you may require. You will then be shown around the Centre, introduced to available staff and other residents, and taken through the fire evacuation process, including all exits and assembly points.



In the first few days, you will be allocated a Case Manager and Key Worker who will support you throughout your assessment. A Social Worker will also be assigned to undertake your parenting assessment.

We offer a range of sessions for families, such as baby massage, messy play, and cooking activities, which form part of your assessment process. You are expected to attend these sessions, as they support your learning, confidence, and engagement as a parent.



## 6. How staff will work with you

The assessment process is a shared process, and you will be involved in the planning, feedback sessions and meetings, and it is hoped that you will contribute positively and find the process is helpful to you being a parent.

Whilst our staff will be supporting you, you will have full responsibility for yourself and your baby/family, unless otherwise agreed as part of your plan. This means making sure that you and your baby/family are well and healthy, with good food and plenty of fresh air and enough sleep. You must also keep yourself and your baby/family safe, clean and encourage your children's development with play and communication; even tiny babies will need this. You will also be responsible for your own money and income, and will be supported, if necessary, to manage your weekly budget.

**“ You'll have individual sessions with staff on areas you need support with. There are group sessions for you to attend.**

When you move in, you'll be given a work plan, this is like a timetable. Your work plan will explain the sessions of work you're expected to do and when. It also includes the levels of supervision required for you and your children. Staff will work with you, supervising you carrying out tasks with your children. Our staff work shifts, so you'll have somebody working with you during the morning, staff then change in the afternoon.

You'll have individual sessions with staff on areas you need support with. There are group sessions for you to attend. Staff will support you and give you advice and guidance.

You will have regular feedback, and your key worker will give you targets and areas of priority every 7 - 10 days. You will always be given the opportunity to make comments during feedback sessions and identify areas you require further support with.

You will attend regular review meetings to formally discuss your assessment with your key worker, Social Worker, and other professionals involved in your case. A written review report will be provided for these meetings. There is a section of this report for your own comments. Our fully trained team always works closely with you to assess any shortfall in knowledge, skills and understanding for caring for your child and offers individual parenting support programmes, according to your needs and capabilities.

## 7. Feedback and development

During your assessment, the team will help you to focus on your strengths- (what you do well) and tell you the areas you may need to develop further, (do better) whilst providing you with guidance, support and weekly feedback to talk about your progress.

The assessment reports are completed by the team who support you and they work with a specialist assessing social worker who will also work with you- and they oversee and prepare the final reports.

The final assessment report will be based on our observations of your parenting, evidenced based and our feedback and recommendations will indicate if further support or additional assessments are required. It is the Local Authority and court's decisions to what happens next.

We would also very much like to hear what you think about our Centre, whether it is good or bad. We can only make sure our Centre is a helpful and supportive place for families, if you tell us which of the things we do are helpful to you, and which of the things we do would maybe be better done a different way.

There are different ways that you could tell us:

- Tell us at one of the Resident's meetings that we hold every week
- Tell your key worker – they will bring it to the next staff meeting we have
- Fill in one of the forms that are in your room and pop it in the white suggestion box by the front door at any time during your stay
- Complete our evaluation form at the end of your stay

If either of these methods are used, we would be able to discuss it with you within 2 weeks from you telling us.

**“ The final assessment report will be based on our observations of your parenting, evidenced based and our feedback and recommendations will indicate if further support or additional assessments are required.**



## 8. Respecting your Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality

- You have the right to expect confidentiality, and their dignity respected. Parents and children have access to external advice and support (including through relevant helplines) which they can contact directly, and in private, about problems or concerns.
- All residents have the right to have information held about themselves or their families etc. held in a secure place, which is unavailable to people that do not have a right to access.
- If any resident expresses a wish to have a confidential conversation with a staff member, solicitor or social worker, we have a private room for this purpose.
- You have a right to expect that your own personal belongings will remain safe.
- All residents have the right to expect privacy in their own room and can expect staff to knock before entering. As far as the assessment process will allow, your own room is private, staff will knock before entering and unless they have serious concerns regarding health or safety, will only enter when invited to do so. You are however, expected to spend much of your time in the communal rooms, with staff and other families, so that we can see how you are looking after yourself and your baby/family.
- If you have personal counselling, your sessions will remain confidential between



**“ The location and use of CCTV surveillance cameras will be made clear to you either before their placement starts or on the first day of their placement during the Placement Agreement meeting.**

- yourself and your Counsellor, unless serious safety concerns arise from any of the sessions. Private facilities are provided for this purpose.
- The location and use of CCTV surveillance cameras will be made clear to you either before their placement starts or on the first day of their placement during the Placement Agreement meeting. The CCTV will record 24 hours a day. Any copies made of recordings will be stored securely and will be held for a period of 3 years and will only be shared under realms

of General Data Protection Regulations (2018) and within the terms of the CCTV and Surveillance Policy.

- All communal areas and all bedrooms have CCTV. The cameras in bedrooms are positioned to capture the cot or sleeping area of the child/children in order to monitor their safety. There will be no covert surveillance.
- Video or audio baby monitors may be provided for parents to use while they are temporarily away from their child (for example, when showering, using the toilet, or preparing feeds).
- Parents are responsible for using the monitor as part of their own supervision arrangements during these short periods. The monitors are designed to support parents in keeping their baby safe and are not used for continuous staff observation.
- Staff do not routinely watch or listen to the monitors. However, staff may access live or recorded footage only in specific circumstances – for example, if there are safeguarding concerns, if an incident occurs, or where this has been agreed as part of the parenting assessment plan with the parent and social worker.
- The purpose and use of the monitors are fully explained during admission and recorded within each individual parenting assessment plan. This ensures that both parents and staff understand when and how the monitors will be used.

## 9. Protecting Children and Parents under the Age of 18

- Families placed at the Fern Lodge have a right to and must be enabled by staff to feel safe and be safe. They need to understand how to protect themselves, feel protected and be protected from significant harm.
- All Fern Lodge staff are fully trained in Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. All staff are familiar with what action to take where concerns have arisen for the safety or wellbeing of a child or vulnerable adult.
- All staff working at Fern Lodge have had enhanced police check through the Disclosure and Barring System (DBS)
- All staff will be made aware at induction of their responsibility to protect children and young people. A child is anyone under the age of 18.
- We have House rules to ensure children and residents feel safe at Fern Lodge and this is shared with families on arrival.



## 10. House Rules

- No physical, verbal threats or violence of any sort. If you are violent while you are at Fern Lodge, you may be asked to leave, your Social Worker and the police may be contacted.
- No bullying – this includes comments which are disrespectful of another person’s ability; gender; sexual orientation; race; culture; age or physical appearance. If you behave like this, you may be asked to leave Fern Lodge.
- No alcohol is to be brought onto the premises of the Fern Lodge site. If we think you have drunk alcohol, or have brought alcohol onto the site, you may be asked to leave.
- No illicit drugs are to be brought onto the premises of Fern Lodge. If we think you have taken illicit drugs, or have brought them onto the site, you may be asked to leave.
- Any drugs, medicines, tablets or creams that the doctor has asked you or a member of your family staying at Fern Lodge to take, or that you have bought, must be handed in to staff to be recorded and monitored.
- At Fern Lodge you cannot care for, or interfere with the care of, other resident’s children. Also, you may not leave your children in the care of other residents at the Centre.
- You may not take photographs or videos of children for whom you are not responsible, or other adults.
- All music and any other noise should be kept to a minimum and if staff request that the noise level be lowered, the request must be complied with immediately.
- You may not leave the premises unless it is agreed in your plan, either with or without your child/ren.
- You **MUST** notify staff if you leave the premises at any time.
- You may not visit other rooms between the hours of 9pm and 10am
- Visitors may only visit you at the Centre if it is part of your agreed plan and this must be agreed with the Centre prior to any visit taking place.
- Fire procedures and fire drills must be adhered to.
- No pets including fish are allowed at Fern Lodge.
- Under no circumstances may a room be decorated
- Nothing should be taken from the Centre unless agreed in writing with staff. If we think something has been stolen by you, we will report it to the Police.



# 11. Fire Procedures

You will be shown the fire procedures during the first day of your stay, so that you know how to keep yourself and your family safe should there be a fire.

## **If You Find a Fire:**

- Sound the Fire Alarm
- Close the door onto the fire
- Collect your baby and children
- Leave by the front door to the assemble point – FRONT LAWN
- Tell the fire Marshal that you are safe

**Do not stop to collect anything except your Baby and Child (if they are with you)**

## **If you hear the Fire Alarm:**

- Collect your baby and children
- Leave by the front door to the opposite pavement
- Tell the fire Marshal that you are safe

**If your Baby or Child(ren) is with a member of Staff, they will bring them outside to you.**



## 12. Complaints Procedure

Lighthouse FAS is committed to promoting and putting all families and babies at the forefront to provide the best service delivery. However, we acknowledge that sometimes residents of purchases of our services may be unhappy when our services do not meet their expectations and may wish to complain. Lighthouse FAS welcomes feedback and complaints and will use these to continuously evaluate and update our service delivery.

Anyone that is receiving a service from Lighthouse FAS or is making a complaint on behalf of a person receiving our services can make a complaint to us. This can include the person who has made the referral for the placement or a legal guardian, such as someone with legal parental responsibility. You can also get someone to help you make your complaint.

**Lighthouse FAS complaints procedure has three stages:**

**Stage one:** where the matter can be addressed by the unit

**Stage two:** an independent investigation/LADO investigation

**Stage three:** Independent panel review hearing

**Taking your complaint further:**

If you do not wish to bring your complaint directly to Fern Lodge, you can go through other people such as your Social Worker, Solicitor or Children's Guardian. You can also complain directly to your placing local authority or Ofsted.

**What is Ofsted?** Ofsted is the office for standards in education, children's services, and skills. They report directly to parliament and are independent and impartial. They inspect and regulate services which care for children and young people, and those providing education and skills for learners of all ages, including Fern Lodge.

**The National Complaints Team Ofsted,**

National Business Unit, Piccadilly Gate Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 4666

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

**Other useful numbers:**

**Child Line** 0800 1111

**Family Lives** 08088002222

**Voice Advocacy Service** 0808 800 579

## 13. Frequently Asked Questions



### **What do I have to bring with me?**

Your room is ready for you to move into, all furniture, kitchen equipment is supplied. We provide larger items for your baby, such as a baby bath, cots, cold water steriliser, and highchair. Any other items your child/ baby needs will need to be provided by yourself, like toys, a bouncer chair and a pushchair etc.

### **Who works at Fern Lodge?**

Fern Lodge employs a wide range of staff. Everyone is friendly and has relevant qualifications and experience. We have a notice board in the centre displaying staff photos and their role

### **Will I have to share my room with other residents?**

You do not have to share any of your room facilities with other residents. Residents have a shared kitchen with dining area, lounge with play area and laundry room.

### **Can I smoke at Fern Lodge?**

There is an area in the garden/patio for you to use during your stay. For health and safety reasons, no smoking is allowed inside your room, or any other areas of the building. At night, the centre's security system is in use, so unfortunately there is no smoking after 11 pm.

## **Can I visit Fern Lodge before I move in?**

Of course, we encourage families to visit the centre before moving in. You can arrange this through your Social Worker, or Solicitor. We can arrange a virtual visit for families who live further away and can't visit before moving in.

## **How long will I need to stay at Fern Lodge?**

All family's circumstances are different, and each will stay at Fern Lodge for different amounts of time. On average, a typical stay is between 4-12 weeks.

## **Are you on camera/ being filmed while living at Fern Lodge?**

Fern Lodge has CCTV in communal areas such as the garden, landings and car park etc. There are fixed cameras in resident's rooms, The cameras in bedrooms are positioned to capture the cot or sleeping area of the child/children in order to monitor their safety.

## **Do you offer any activities or events for parents?**

We have various groups happening each week, including a resident's meeting, sensory play, play groups for older children, and educational groups (focusing on things like protection work and self-esteem). We also hold social events to celebrate different cultural events, i.e. Easter, Eid, Diwali, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Ramadan. Etc. We also organise outings at various points through the year to local places of interest.

## **Can my friends/ family visit me at Fern Lodge?**

We encourage friends and family to visit you during your time here; however, all visitors must be approved by your social worker before they visit.