

# 1226612

Registered provider: Harmony Residential Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This private home provides care and accommodation for up to three children aged between 11 and 18 years. The home looks after children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

**Inspection dates:** 12 to 13 September 2017

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers inadequate

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

**Date of last inspection:** 20 December 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** Good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:**

None

## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- The management team has failed to refer to and inform the designated officer and Ofsted of several allegations regarding staff practice. This is not in line with the home's safeguarding policy.
- Individual and generic risk assessments do not include all of the risks that the children face.
- Although the staff regularly seek the children's views, these views do not actively inform practice.
- Internal monitoring arrangements are poor and do not contribute to identifying areas for improvement.
- The independent visitor's reports do not evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the home and have failed to identify the shortfalls raised at the inspection.
- Pre-employment checks of agency staff are not thorough enough to ensure safe recruitment.
- The staff team is lacking in experience and skills. No staff hold the required level 3 qualification.
- Measures of controls are not consistently recorded. When the measures are recorded, the records do not describe the views of the child or make a meaningful link to the behaviour.
- A number of documents, including the children's guide and records of return from missing, supervision and activities, are poor.

The children's home's strengths:

- The children all benefit from good relationships with the staff and each other. They like living at the home.
- The children and staff have access to therapeutic input from the home's consultant psychologist.
- The manager has developed strong links with other key professionals. This ensures a unified approach to the children's care.
- The staff provide children with a structured daily routine, and praise their achievements. The children make good progress towards their goals.
- The staff provide the children with an environment in which they can express themselves and explore their awareness of diversity and equality.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/07/2017	Monitoring	No judgement
20/12/2016	Full	Good

## What does the children's home need to do to improve?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who develop positive relationships with them, engage with them and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; and help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child. (Regulation 7(1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i)(iii))</p>	13/10/2017
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(b))</p>	13/10/2017
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that helps children aspire to fulfil their potential and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff: have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p>	13/10/2017

(Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(g)(ii)(h))	
<p>The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home, or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). (Regulation 32(2)(a)(b))</p>	13/10/2017
<p>The registered person must implement a policy which sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular, provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority, and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located, and provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response. (Regulation 34(1)(b)(2)(b)(d))</p> <p>This is with particular regard to allegations regarding staff practice.</p>	13/10/2017
<p>The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes: the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ('the user'), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure. (Regulation 35(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii))</p>	13/10/2017
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40(4)(c))</p>	13/10/2017
<p>The independent person must produce a report about a visit ('the independent person's report') which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44(4))</p>	31/10/2017

## Recommendations

- Ensure that the children's guide helps children understand the day-to-day routines of the home, and the care that they can expect to receive while living at the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.22)
- Ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities both inside and outside of the home and are encouraged to participate in those activities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5)
- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- All children's case records must be kept up to date and stored securely while they remain in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good**

The home requires improvement. There are some strengths in the service and children are making good progress. However, the inspection has identified a number of weaknesses in practice. These include monitoring, response to allegations about staff practice, records and leadership and management. The management team needs to address these shortfalls in order to support children fully and to lessen risk.

Since the last inspection, a monitoring visit took place in July 2017 following a breach of conditions of registration. The provider, although only registered to provide care and accommodation for three children, admitted a fourth child for a period of two days. Since the monitoring visit, no further children have moved to the home, and one child has left the home.

The staff work hard to seek the views of the children through individual sessions and daily conversations. They clearly document the children's views about their care.

However, the children do not consistently receive a sufficient response from managers. For example, one child has raised issues about how some of the staff have responded to her behaviour. Despite this, the managers have not spoken to the child to gain her full perspective or identified potential practice issues. Although the staff seek children's views, the lack of response from the managers does not make the children feel fully listened to.

The children engage in activities such as going to a recording studio, pamper sessions and trips to the cinema. However, the staff have not fully engaged all of the children to develop their particular interests, despite the children suggesting things that they may like, such as going on a bike ride or a trampoline. This lack of encouragement does not support the children to broaden their horizons or develop new skills.

The children are making good progress. In particular, risk-taking behaviour has significantly reduced, including lengthy missing-from-home incidents that were prevalent before admission. The children are making positive choices in their lives, focusing on their futures, and engaging with professionals. They feel settled and engage with the staff and other professionals, who work together to meet their needs. The staff praise and celebrate children's achievements verbally, in written records and with rewards. The staff recently celebrated a child's full year at the home with a party. This celebration was a wonderful surprise for the child, who was not expecting the party. These celebrations and acknowledgements encourage the children to continue to make progress.

The children access the services and support that they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological needs. They engage with the organisation's consultant psychologist in individual sessions, eat healthy home-cooked food and attend their health appointments. This engagement provides the children with the knowledge to make informed choices about their health.

All of the children have made progress in their education. Some children whose attendance was poor prior to admission benefit from full-time education, and they regularly attend and achieve. This is because the staff motivate the children, provide them with consistent boundaries and routines and have good aspirations for them. Multi-agency relationships ensure that there are good communication systems that keep professionals and children updated on the children's progress. Staff encourage other children who are waiting for confirmation of their education placement to engage in some education. The children receive support to aspire to reach their potential, and to build their confidence, self-esteem and social skills. This support means that any barriers to learning that the children face are addressed, which enhances their future life options.

The staff strongly promote individuality, equality and celebrating difference. They understand the children's individuality, and provide an environment in which the children can express themselves and explore and develop their awareness of diversity and equality.

The staff encourage contact with children's families and they understand the importance of family relationships in the children's success. The staff advocate for the children and

work with placing authorities when contact has not been sufficient for the child. This multi-agency working and acting on children's needs have resulted in one child having increased structured contact with their family. This increased contact has resulted in a decrease in the child going missing from the home. The staff provide transport to and supervision of family contact to enable it to take place. This support helps the children to maintain or re-establish family relationships, despite some of the children living quite a distance from their family homes.

The staff know the children well. Interactions are warm, positive and respectful because staff spend good-quality time with the children. The staff work hard to make the environment and atmosphere comfortable and nurturing. The children are relaxed, enjoy staff company and like living at the home. The staff provide children with structure, routine and boundaries that encourage the children to develop a sense of belonging. A child said, 'I feel safe because of the staff.'

The children learn skills such as budgeting, cooking, self-care and independence. They are encouraged to build their skills through taking responsibility for keeping rooms tidy, cooking meals and shopping. These skills increase their confidence and will support them into adulthood.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

Concerns about poor staff practice have not been managed properly. These include allegations about staff transporting the children to the shops to enable them to buy cigarettes. The managers have failed to refer concerns to the designated officer or to consistently investigate allegations. Attempts to investigate allegations are poor. The records made by the manager do not detail all of the actions taken. In one case, the child's views were gained seven days after the incident. The failure to refer allegations and delays in investigations does not ensure that the children's welfare is consistently promoted.

Carefully recruited permanent staff are assessed as suitable to work with and care for the children. However, the staff and manager have failed to ensure that agency staff are thoroughly checked. Some of the agency staff records do not include two references, as is required, and there is no information regarding staff skills, experience and training. The provider has taken immediate action to address this shortfall during the inspection. However, failure to undertake and record checks effectively prior to agency staff working at the home potentially places children at risk.

Individual and generic risk assessments are weak. They fail to include all of the children's individual known information and the strategies to reduce potential risks. This shortfall is heightened by the increased use of agency staff. The home's lone-working risk assessment lacks clarity. The document does not clearly set out the potential risks and the strategies that the staff are required to follow to keep themselves and the children safe. Individual lone-working risk assessments are not undertaken in line with the home's lone-working policy. Therefore, staff who are less experienced and on



probation are lone working without additional support and strategies. This practice potentially places the staff and the children at risk.

The staff encourage the children's positive behaviour, and, in general, the children do not display challenging behaviour. The staff provide clear expectations and reward positive behaviours and achievements. They have sufficient knowledge of how children's previous experiences influence their current behaviours. When, on occasions, the children's behaviour is inappropriate, such as smoking in their rooms, the staff address this with a consequence. However, the consequences do not relate to the behaviour, they are not recorded consistently in the dedicated book, and staff do not seek the views of the child. The records of consequences are not evaluated to aid understanding of their effectiveness. This shortfall does not enable the children to reflect on or fully understand the impact of their behaviour. The lack of detail in the records makes it difficult to monitor the trends and patterns of the children's behaviour.

The children feel safe at the home. They can identify a number of staff members whom they trust to talk to if they have a concern. These relationships with the staff are a key strength of the home and are established through staff spending good-quality time with the children. The children treat each other respectfully and confirmed that they do not feel bullied.

The children have all significantly reduced their missing-from-home episodes since their admission to the home. When the children leave the home without prior agreement, staff are responsive and proactive. They follow the children when practical and monitor their whereabouts. The information gained is provided to external agencies, in order to locate the children swiftly. The staff collect children and welcome them back to the home. The relationships and engagement with staff, coupled with the children wanting to be at the home, have contributed to fewer missing-from-home incidents. However, despite some requests for children to have independent interviews on their return, these are still not occurring. Thus, the children do not speak to an independent individual regarding their reasons for going missing.

The home's safeguarding policies and procedures clearly detail the action to take if a concern arises. The staff receive safeguarding training, and discussions with the staff demonstrated a sufficient awareness of the safeguarding procedures. The staff record their conversations with children and detail any incidents as required. This practice ensures that the children's records are factual and clear, and provide a detailed account to enable further action and support to be identified.

An in-depth location risk assessment informs staff of the potential risks to children in their local area. The identification of these risks and actions taken to reduce these have helped to keep the children safe.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is inadequate. The inspection identified a number of shortfalls that the management team was not aware of. Internal and

independent monitoring has not been strong enough to identify these shortfalls. In addition, the external monitoring reports do not include the independent visitor's view of safeguarding at the home. Thus, the monitoring of the home does not improve the quality of care that the children receive.

The registered manager has recently resigned from the service. The provider has taken sufficient steps and appointed an agency manager who is in the process of registering with Ofsted. The appointed manager has relevant experience and is qualified.

The manager has met some of the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection and the monitoring visit. A new admissions policy that sets out clear responsibility for decision-making ensures that the home operates within its conditions of registration. The policy clarifies that the manager is in day-to-day charge of the home. Recommendations regarding the children's views of their placement plans and measures of controls are not met. A requirement has been made regarding these. A further two recommendations are not met, and have been repeated. These are with regard to providing more information in the children's guide and carrying out return interviews consistently when the children have been missing from the home.

The storage of the children's records, recruitment files and checks needs improvement. Documents are held in drawers, cabinets and envelopes, and electronically. During the inspection, the staff were not always able to locate documents, such as records of staff supervisions or actions taken in response to a child's complaint. This system fails to ensure that all information regarding the concerns that the children have raised is accessible and that the records of the children's day-to-day care are held in one document. There is insufficient monitoring to identify trends and patterns. The internal and independent monitoring is ineffective; it fails to provide proper oversight of the systems in the home and to drive improvement.

The home's statement of purpose sets out the aims and objectives of the home. The staff have a sound understanding of the ethos of the home. However, the children's guide is not child friendly and does not include information about the daily routine of the home. Therefore, future children admitted to the home may not be provided with this information.

The staff are motivated and passionate about their work with the children. However, there is a lack of experience and skills within the team following a number of staff leaving the home since the last inspection and new staff joining. These changes to the staff team have left less experienced staff, who are still on probation and unqualified, leading shifts with agency members of staff. The changes to the staff team and use of agency staff fail to ensure that the children receive consistent care by a staff team that has the skills and experience to fully meet their needs.

The staff team speaks positively of the support that it receives and acknowledges that recent changes in management have caused some instability. The staff confirm that they receive reflective supervision. However, there are gaps in the supervision records and, thus, identified actions are not recorded. This does not provide the staff with all of the

information and guidance that they require to meet all of the children's needs.

The manager generally ensures that Ofsted receives information about significant events at the home and about the action taken to safeguard the children. However, the manager has failed to inform Ofsted of the recent allegations about staff practice, and it is not clear whether placing authorities were informed. This failure to notify prevents external agencies from monitoring the practice at the home and providing the external safeguards intended.

The management team and staff have built positive relationships with external professionals. One professional said, 'They are a very good and proactive setting. I enjoy working with them.'

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 1226612

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Harmony Residential Homes Limited

**Registered provider address:** Flat 3, Robinson Court, 5 Magdalene Gardens, London N20 0AF

**Responsible individual:** Sajida Kiyanni

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspectors

Natalie Burton, social care inspector

Trish Palmer, social care inspector

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