

1258095

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services (2) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private company that operates a number of children's homes across the country owns this home. This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children who have social and emotional difficulties.

The home has had three managers since registration in December 2017. The current manager has been in post since 2 September 2019. He has a level 5 qualification in leadership and management and intends to apply to be the registered manager.

Inspection dates: 16 to 17 September 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **inadequate**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and/or the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 22 November 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/11/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21/06/2018	Full	Good
06/12/2017	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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> treat each child with dignity and respect; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult; provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. <p>(Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi))</p>	1/11/2019
<p>The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; 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. <p>(Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(ii)(iii))</p>	1/11/2019
<p>The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the</p>	1/11/2019

<p>registered person to ensure that staff help each child to participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child's interests and preferences; and that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child's interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9 (1)(2)(a)(ii)(b))</p>	
<p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff— meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i)(iii)(iv)(x)(xi)(xii)(xiii))</p>	<p>1/11/2019</p>
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(iii)(iv))*</p>	<p>1/11/2019</p>
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p>	<p>1/11/2019</p>

<p>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;</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded;</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (1)(2)(b)(c)(d))</p>	
<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—</p> <p>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e))</p>	1/11/2019
<p>The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.</p> <p>The registered person must keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision.</p> <p>Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose.</p> <p>(Regulation 16 (1)(3)(a)(b)(5))</p>	1/11/2019
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children's home; or</p> <p>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,</p> <p>if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the</p>	1/11/2019

individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1)(2)(a)(b)(3)(d))	
<p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home.</p> <p>The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it.</p> <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 effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure.</p> <p>(Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b)(2)(3)(a)(vii)(b)(i)(ii))</p>	1/11/2019

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

At the time of the inspection, three children were living in the home.

Children are not always treated with dignity and respect by staff. For example, staff have stored furniture in a bathroom used by children, blocking their access to the washing facilities and to the toilet. In addition, staff have involved members of their own families in incidents involving children. This breaches children's confidentiality and places children and family members who are not trained in dealing with children's complex behaviours at potential risk of harm.

Staff do not consistently listen to children's views. As a result, children do not feel that their views matter and are given enough priority. Meetings designed to take account of their views are not held regularly. On the occasions when these meetings are held, staff do not explore the issues that children raise, such as bullying. As a result, it is not clear how staff respond to what children say may be worrying them.

Children develop positive relationships with some staff. However, established staff do not regularly spend time with some children, despite knowing that this is a priority for the children. This is upsetting for children. As a result, children do not feel valued and they do not get to spend time with staff who know them well.

Internal placement plans are not up to date and staff do not regularly review them. Staff do not involve children in setting goals and targets in their plans. This means that children are unaware of their targets and the progress they have made.

Staff do not promote children's hobbies and interests, for instance staff have not enabled a child to use the home's gym. They allowed birds to enter the gym and, as a result, the gym equipment is now soiled with bird excrement. Staff do not clean or protect the equipment from further soiling. They have not put up a child's punchbag despite repeated requests from the child and from the child's social worker. The social worker said that staff do not understand that attending the gym is very important to the child's sense of identity and to his well-being.

Staff do not always ensure that children are cared for in a nurturing and homely environment throughout the home. For example, the kitchen has a stale odour and is dirty in places. Some food in the fridge is not stored safely and some food is out of date. This failure to address environmental factors detracts from children's experience of living in a pleasant and homely environment.

Despite the significant shortfalls identified during this inspection, children do make some progress. For example, all of the children regularly attend the company's school. Children's engagement in their learning means they have made some progress in their education from their starting points. In addition, children attend routine health appointments and some access therapeutic support, which helps to promote their health

and well-being. The children have had some positive experiences, for example they enjoyed a summer holiday.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Staff do not follow agreed strategies to keep themselves and children safe. Children who need to be supervised by two staff are sometimes only supervised by one. This has resulted in staff and children being exposed to harm. For example, a member of staff was sexually assaulted, while on her own with a child who required two members of staff to supervise him.

Staff do not have the skills to manage some children's behaviour. For example, a child assaulted staff, gained possession of a knife from the kitchen and stole a member of staff's car. Staff did not effectively intervene to prevent the situation from escalating as it did. In another incident, a child assaulted staff, hitting them with sticks, attempting to strangle them and rubbing soil in their faces. The incident lasted two hours and staff could not de-escalate the child's behaviour. These incidents placed children and staff at risk of significant harm.

Children living at the home have been assaulted by another child who is also resident. Children said that other children in the home verbally abuse and threaten them. Because of this, some children said that they do not always feel safe living in the home.

Managers have not ensured that staff are recruited safely. For example, managers have not exercised professional curiosity about the reasons why staff who have previously worked with vulnerable adults and young people have faced disciplinary proceedings. This means that managers are not completing comprehensive pre-employment checks to ensure that only suitable staff work with children.

The home's locality risk assessment does not consider risks from nearby farm buildings and a lake. The risks from children having access to a paddock, which is overgrown with nettles, are also not included. Information about crime statistics is out of date. This means that managers and staff have not considered all known risks within the local area and this has the potential to expose children to harm.

The manager's daily checks do not identify all risks in the home. For instance, the location of a pair of scissors and a food mixer with sharp blades is not included. This is despite one child's risk assessment outlining that having access to sharps such as knives is a risk. The laundry has building materials and paint stored in it. Cleaning materials are left on an open shelf. Staff manage these risks by denying children access to the laundry. Children are consequently being denied opportunities to use all areas of the home and to develop independence.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

At the time of the inspection, the manager had been in post for two weeks and the responsible individual for one week. The previous responsible individual had recently left the company unexpectedly. Therefore, the new manager and responsible individual have limited knowledge of the staff and children and they are getting to know the strengths and needs of the service. They have plans to develop the quality of care, but these have yet to be implemented.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that children receive care from a consistent staff team. The permanent staff team has been subject to frequent changes and, since August 2018, 21 staff have left the home and 10 staff have been recruited. The home uses agency staff to cover shortfalls in staffing. Children said they don't know who is looking after them from one day to the next.

Poor management oversight prevents staff and managers from learning strategies to promote individual children's positive behaviours. Staff are unable to manage children's behaviour and prevent this from escalating. Some children's risk-taking and anti-social behaviours increase because staff have not implemented appropriate boundaries.

Some staff are reluctant to restrain children when their behaviour is placing themselves, staff and other children at risk. When restraints occur, leaders and managers do not always review the effectiveness of these incidents and they do not ensure that staff involved can speak with an independent person about the intervention. This does not promote safe restraint practice and effective behaviour management.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that the home is run in line with the statement of purpose or that this document is regularly updated with staff changes. Staff who are new to the company do not have twice-monthly supervision, and team meetings do not take place regularly. This means that the regulator and local authority commissioners do not have an accurate picture of the skills and qualifications of staff working at the home and the level of support that the staff receive.

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: 1258095

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services (2) Ltd

Registered provider address: Turnpike Gate House, Alcester Heath, Alcester,
Warwickshire B49 5JG

Responsible individual: Samantha Millward

Manager: Post Vacant

Inspector

Karen Gillingwater, social care inspector

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