

1253623

Registered provider: The Spring Children's and Transitional Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This service is operated by a private provider and is registered to provide care and accommodation for two children who have learning disabilities.

The registered manager is no longer working at the home. There is an interim manager currently in post.

Inspection dates: 10 to 11 March 2020

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 widespread failures that mean children's welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: 20 November 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: Following the last full inspection two compliance notices, relating to Regulation 12 and Regulation 13, were issued. Neither compliance notices were considered met following a monitoring visit on 7 January 2020 and they were reissued following this visit.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/11/2019	Full	Inadequate
19/02/2019	Full	Good
19/12/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

There continue to be widespread shortfalls that compromise children's welfare and safety in the home. This has led to Ofsted restricting accommodation in the home and reissuing two compliance notices.

Children do not receive well-planned care. Managers and staff do not ensure that they have up-to-date information about children's lives, so their practice is not well-informed. For example, staff have not received one child's review minutes two months after the review took place, when key decisions were made about the child's transition to foster care. Staff did not attend this review and the minutes were not requested in a timely way. Consequently, staff are not fully appraised of the child's imminent transition and associated transition plan.

Staff and managers are unable to evidence children's progress as they do not keep clear records. There are no sanctions and no reward systems used in the home. This means that positive behaviour is not encouraged in a consistent way by staff. This lack of clarity means that staff cannot be consistent and understand progress for children.

Staff cannot evidence how they respond to children's views. Children's meetings take place infrequently, and staff do not give feedback to children about agreed actions when they do happen. This indicates that children's experiences and views are not central to the home's day-to-day development.

Staff do not carry out regular, meaningful key-working sessions. Staff have given children the wrong records to sign on at least two occasions, and, worryingly, children have signed these. This indicates that staff are not making sure that children know what is in their records. The lack of management oversight in the home means that poor staff practice is not challenged.

Managers have amended the children's guide to make it more accessible for children to understand but key information about who children can contact if they are unhappy has been removed. Managers are unaware that there is guidance in this area. This does not promote children's welfare.

The effectiveness of staff communication and relationships with professionals outside the home is inconsistent. As a result, children do not benefit from the support of a well-functioning, multi-agency network.

Despite many shortfalls, children have good relationships with staff, some of which are long-standing. These relationships are important to children and help them to build their self-esteem and confidence. As children prepare to move out of the home staff ensure that they are available to talk with children and reassure them. This lets children know that they are important to staff.

Staff respond with nurture and swift action when children are unwell. If children need to attend hospital, staff support them because of genuine concern for their well-being. Children know they will be well-supported by staff at these times, and this is reassuring for them.

Staff support independence work, with children working at their own pace, and some progress is being made. Records are becoming clearer. There are some opportunities, such as children walking home independently from staff when they are within the local area, that could be taken further by staff, if well risk assessed. However, staff do not identify these opportunities and so children are not being stretched to achieve further independence.

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

Not all staff were present at the launch of new safeguarding guidance and they were not offered an alternative opportunity to become familiar with this guidance. Inspectors identified that despite several staff signing to confirm that they had read and understood the new guidance this was not in fact the case. Managers were unaware of this prior to the inspection. Further, the safeguarding policy identified the designated lead for child protection as someone who no longer was employed by the provider. This failure of managers to ensure that all staff had understanding of new information means that they cannot be assured that staff practice aligns with their own guidance.

Managers have made some improvements to the quality of risk assessments since the last inspection. Despite this, risk assessments remain overly brief and still do not address specifically identified risks that children are subject to. Nor do they provide staff with appropriate strategies with which to manage these risks. Staff are unaware of some of the risks that children are vulnerable to and some staff are not aware that children have risk assessments. It remains the case that staff are not given sufficient guidance to manage or minimise risks and this leaves children vulnerable. This area was subject to a compliance notice and insufficient progress has been made to address this shortfall.

Staff do not have a consistent approach to behaviour management and do not make expectations about behaviour clear. The behaviour management policy is confused and does not clearly identify how staff should positively manage children's behaviour. Not all staff have read the behaviour management policy and there is no mechanism for managers to understand why staff have not done so. Further, not all staff are aware that children have behaviour management plans. When children tell staff that they are unhappy about how other children treat them staff do not address this. This indicates that children's feelings are not taken seriously and means that they continue to be treated unkindly, which can hinder their development and emotional well-being.

Recruitment processes in the company are not clear. Some staff have been recruited in a different part of the company and evidence of their safe recruitment is not available in the home. The interim manager has not seen essential documents and

she is not able to assure herself of the suitability of staff who then come to work in the home.

Despite the independent visitor to the home providing detailed records of their visits, they continue to omit to state whether children are effectively safeguarded. This means that the regulator is not provided with comprehensive information, as required by regulation.

Managers have not updated the home's location risk assessment to include all known local risks, such as risk of knife crime and criminal exploitation. Without these issues being noted and risk assessed, staff are less able to keep children safe. These risks have also not been fully considered for individual children, which limits how staff can consider how to further develop children's independence.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Since the last inspection, the registered manager has stopped working in the home and an interim manager is in post. Management systems are not yet established and the capacity of the interim manager to manage the home is untested. The systemic failure of management identified at the last full inspection has not been addressed. The responsible individual does not have a sound knowledge of regulations and guidance and has been ineffective in ensuring that the requirements and compliance notices were met. This indicates a significant shortfall in leadership and management of the home.

Managers monitoring of the quality of care is ineffective and does not drive forward improvements. The registered manager did not complete a quality of care review before he left and there is no effective plan for developing and improving care in the home. A monthly audit has been introduced since the last full inspection, but actions are not consistently completed. The audit is inaccurate, and it does not help managers to understand the quality of care or progress that children make. Managers do not realise when key documents are missing from children's files, so cannot be assured that care planning for children is effective.

Managers have not ensured that staff complete essential training relevant to their role and in line with the statement of purpose. For example, senior staff who are identified child protection leads have not completed safeguarding refresher courses and some staff have not completed training in understanding and working with children with learning disabilities. Records remain inaccurate and so managers do not have up-to-date information about staff's skills and abilities.

The interim manager is now providing regular supervision. However, the quality of supervision, including that of the managers, is poor. Actions are not clearly noted and key discussions, such as in relation to the new safeguarding processes, have not taken place. Managers are not challenging practice through supervision, and accountability is unclear. Staff are not constructively supported to complete essential tasks and develop in their roles.

In the absence of a registered manager the responsible individual has not ensured that the statement of purpose is accurate. This means that partners cannot be clear about the arrangements for care. It also means that staff cannot be clear about how their work meets the aims and objectives of the home, and so effectively care for children.

Managers do not challenge external professionals to ensure they have the relevant information they need to effectively care for children. Managers appear unaware of their duties set out in regulations to pursue and be in possession of relevant information, so requests are not appropriately escalated. This hinders staff's ability to work to agreed plans, and so hinders children's progress.

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>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority’s or a relevant person’s performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child’s needs are met in accordance with the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c))</p>	24/04/2020
<p>The children’s views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children’s care and welfare and their lives. (Regulation 7 (1)(c))</p> <p>In particular, staff should ensure that they respond to concerns raised by children.</p>	24/04/2020
<p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p> <p>positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding;</p> <p>communicate to each child expectations about the child’s behaviour and ensure that the child understands those</p>	24/04/2020

<p>expectations in accordance with the child’s age and understanding. (Regulation 11(1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(iii)(v))</p>	
<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—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies;</p> <p>that the effectiveness of the home’s child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(v)(vii)(e))*</p>	<p>06/04/2020 *</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—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>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 have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</p>	<p>06/04/2020 *</p>

<p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(c)(f)(h))*</p>	
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and</p> <p>plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child’s placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(iii))</p>	<p>06/04/2020</p>
<p>The registered person must—</p> <p>keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b))</p>	<p>06/04/2020</p>
<p>A responsible individual must—</p> <p>satisfy the requirements in paragraph (5)(a) to (c); and</p> <p>have the capacity, experience and skills to supervise the management of the home, or the homes, in respect of which the responsible individual is nominated. (Regulation 26 (7)(a)(b))</p>	<p>06/04/2020</p>
<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 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</p>	<p>08/03/2020</p>

<p>that individual to work at the home, 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 individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1)(2)(a)(b)(3)(d))</p> <p>In particular, gaps in employment should be verified and evidence of the safer recruitment of staff working in the home should be available in the home.</p>	
<p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out—</p> <p>how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home. (Regulation 35 (1))</p>	06/04/2020
<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p> <p>are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p>	06/04/2020
<p>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month.</p> <p>When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person—</p> <p>if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires.</p> <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—</p> <p>children are effectively safeguarded; and</p> <p>the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (1)(2)(a)(4)(a)(b))</p>	06/04/2020
<p>The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months.</p>	06/04/2020

<p>In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating—</p> <p>the quality of care provided for children;</p> <p>the feedback and opinions of children about the children’s home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and</p> <p>any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children.</p> <p>After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report").</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and</p> <p>make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1)(2)(a)(b)(c)(3)(4)(a)(b)(5))</p>	
<p>The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children’s home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard).</p> <p>When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46 (1)(2))</p>	<p>24/04/2020</p>

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

The children's guide should help children to understand:

- what the day to day routines of the home are ('what happens in the home');
- the Statement of Purpose of the home (the care they can expect to receive while living there);
- how to make a complaint in line with the home's complaints procedure;
- how they can access advocacy support or independent advocacy if eligible; and
- how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.22)

In particular, the children's guide should be written and presented in a way which is accessible to all children who live in the home and include all the required information.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: 1253623

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: The Spring Children's and Transitional Care Ltd

Registered provider address: 9 Grenville Drive, Birmingham B23 7YX

Responsible individual: Blessing Manyara

Registered manager: Alastair McDonald

Inspector

Karol Keenan, Social Care Inspector

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