

SC033502

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

A local authority operates and runs this home. It provides care and accommodation for up to four children and young people aged between 12 and 18. The children and young people have a range of social, emotional and behavioural needs. The manager has been registered since May 2020.

Visit dates: 8 to 9 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 12 March 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Declined in effectiveness

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Most of the children and young people are settled living at the home. During the COVID-19 lockdown, the staff kept the children and young people occupied with planned activities. These included baking, kick-boxing, gym workouts, board games, outdoor games and garden parties. Some of the children and young people also had a summer holiday away with staff. This strengthened the children's and young people's relationships with each other and the staff team.

The children and young people were required to stop attending school during the pandemic. The staff were creative and taught educational and practical skills, such as painting and decorating. This kept the children and young people busy and motivated and has resulted in a brightly decorated home of which the children and young people are proud. The staff have ongoing discussions with the children and young people about education and their future prospects. These discussions helped prepare the children and young people, who have recently returned to school and college.

The staff team works with the in-house multi-disciplinary team to understand the children's and young people's physical, emotional and social needs. The manager and staff work tirelessly and help those children and young people who struggle with living away from their family. The manager's engagement in multi-agency meetings provides a coordinated approach in order to improve the child's or young person's care and experiences.

The children and young people are involved in their care planning. This includes the staff seeking their views during regular discussions, monthly reviews and during the residents' meetings. Some of the young people benefit from independent visitors and personal assistants advocating on their behalf. This helps to empower the young people so that they can communicate their needs.

The staff recognise the importance that family time has on the children's and young people's emotional well-being. When face-to-face restrictions were in force during the lockdown period, the staff made sure that children and young people spoke to their family by phone or by video calling. Staff also drove past a family member's home so one child could wave to their grandparent. As restrictions were lifted, staff drove one child to have socially distanced chats from the car. This helped reassure and settle a child who had anxieties about a family member's safety.

The safety of children

The staff knows the children's and young people's individual risk-taking behaviours and vulnerabilities. These are outlined in the detailed risk management plans. The COVID-19 home's risk assessment, which follows government guidelines, gives staff easy-to-read information about the pandemic. The staff educate the children and young people about the virus, using child-friendly information. During lockdown, the children and young people enjoyed sitting down with staff to watch the daily

government briefings. This gave the children and young people the opportunity to express their anxieties to staff.

Missing-from-home episodes have reduced, so children and young people are at reduced risk of harm from exploitation. The designated police officers visit the home to get to know the children and young people. If a child or young person is late returning home or goes missing, staff follow the missing protocol and work with the police. This joined-up approach helps to locate the children and young people quickly.

One young person continued to leave the home during the COVID-19 restrictions. Staff educated the young person on how to keep himself safe when he was away from home. On his return, the young person complied with the safety measures at the home, such as hand washing and changing his clothes. This kept him, the other children and young people, and staff, safe. No one has caught the virus at the home.

To encourage better self-regulation, the caring staff have held children appropriately in times of crisis. This strategy has helped to keep the individual child and others safe. The proactive staff discuss the incidents with the behaviour management trainer, helping them to identify potential triggers and respond appropriately. This helps to keep the child calm and relaxed, resulting in fewer incidents.

Complaints or allegations are thoroughly investigated by leaders and managers. There is further scrutiny of staff practice from the independent visitor, who has continued to monitor the home remotely to provide extra safeguards for the children and young people.

Leaders and managers

The new registered manager and responsible individual bring a wealth of experience and knowledge. The strong leadership at the home means the staff are now working more cohesively as a team. The staff speak positively about the manager's open and transparent approach.

Staff receive supervision and attend regular team meetings. Additionally, they enjoy the open-door approach of the manager and in-house clinicians.

The new monitoring processes make sure that staff are completing the regular housekeeping and recording tasks. This has resulted in regularly updated plans for the children and young people. The new systems also help the manager and staff to identify any spikes or decline in a child's or young person's behaviour or well-being. For example, close monitoring of a young person's weight through a food diary has reduced the staff's concerns about the young person's health.

The core, long-standing staff team ensured that any gaps in the rota through staff absences due to the pandemic were covered. This provided consistency and stability for the children and young people at a time of uncertainty.

There have been no requirements or recommendations raised following this visit.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC033502

Registered provider: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

Registered provider address: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, City Hall, Centenary Square, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD1 1HY

Responsible individual: David Byrom
Mark Trinder

Registered manager: Wayne Gates

Inspector

Tina Ruffles, Social Care Inspector

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