

1245565

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private provider. The home was not operational for a period of eight months. It reopened in July 2020 with a revised placement offer.

The statement of purpose states that the home provides a 12-week assessment for a maximum of three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties and associated complex needs.

There is an acting manager in post. The provider is actively seeking to recruit a new manager who will make an application to register with Ofsted.

Visit dates: 7 to 8 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 18 June 2018

Previous inspection judgement: Good

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

This home specialises in providing care and accommodation for children whose needs, risks and strengths need to be determined. Staff carry out an assessment over a 12-week period, supported by the organisation's clinical team. Children receive some of their care away from the home.

Children living at the home can form trusting, positive relationships with staff and managers. Children identify staff who they can talk to about any worries they have. However, some children cared for away from the children's home setting may experience changes of staff as they transition between off-site and on-site care. As time progresses, children receive care and support from staff who understand their individual needs. This can be a very positive experience for some children.

One professional commented on the consistency of care provided to a child and how instrumental this had been in placement stability, despite the child having quite a difficult start in the placement.

A number of staff do not hold the required level 3 qualification, but they bring other transferable skills to their work.

Children are supported to keep in touch with people who matter to them. Children are encouraged to express their wishes, views and feelings and be part of meetings to plan their care. There is evidence of multi-agency working to address children's needs, particularly children's emotional health needs.

Children have only been accommodated in recent months, at a time when COVID-19 restrictions were easing. Plans for children's education have progressed slowly, and there is some anxiety from social workers and parents about education provision and how children will be supported back into education.

The home is reasonably well maintained. There is little in the way of personalisation, but the home is comfortable.

The safety of children

For several weeks prior to this assurance visit, the management oversight of this home was inadequate. Poor management oversight has at times impaired the quality of care provided.

Basic support for staff, such as supervision, team meetings, coaching, development and reflective practice, had been lacking. Incidents in the home did not receive

proper scrutiny. A number of physical restraint records had no management oversight. When incidents occurred, there was no record of discussion with staff to facilitate learning or to identify any poor practice.

Senior managers identified these shortfalls very quickly and took appropriate action. The management team is following an action plan to address these shortfalls and bring about rapid improvement.

Staff understand children's vulnerabilities and risks. However, strategies to reduce the risk of one particular child going missing from the placement were not robust enough initially. The use of holiday lets for short-term stays away from the home carries a risk if the environment is not tailored to specific safeguarding needs. It also makes the task of providing care more challenging for staff.

Staff receive appropriate training, although this information was difficult for managers to find. The clinical support available to staff, through consultations, will help staff to understand children's behaviour and find effective strategies to help children who are struggling emotionally. This has somewhat mitigated the lack of practice-related supervision.

Leaders and managers

There is a new manager in charge of the day-to-day running of the home. She is being supported by the responsible individual and other senior managers. This is a very new arrangement. The provider is actively recruiting to the vacant manager's post.

The home has had a difficult start, and there were clear deficits in leadership and management. This has been addressed very quickly by senior managers.

The model of care used in the home and the practice of taking children out of the home for periods of time is good. However, this requires a highly skilled staff team and good management oversight. There is some encouraging work and some evidence that children are making progress, but it is early days. Contingency planning for children who may not be a good match together in the home needs to improve to avoid children having extended stays in temporary accommodation.

The statement of purpose is generic in parts and does not clearly set out the home's offer. In particular, the model of care is not explained well, and it does not cover contingencies.

Two requirements were made at the last full inspection in June 2018. Given the time elapsed, and the change to an assessment-based placement, these requirements were no longer deemed relevant.

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 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 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; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(c)(f)(h))</p> <p>This relates to the oversight of staff practice and the recording of such, managers' oversight and evaluation of the use of physical intervention to manage children's behaviour, and the supervision and development of staff. In particular, this relates to the need to respond effectively when there are potential shortfalls in practice and manage the home as detailed in the statement of purpose.</p>	26/10/2020
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. 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). The requirements are that the individual has the appropriate</p>	26/10/2020

experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform;
and 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)(b)(d))

This specifically relates to staff working at the home and staff caring for children off site. Staff caring for children must have the necessary experience, qualification and skills to provide safe care at all times. Additionally, records relating to recruitment, probationary periods, training and development must be available at the home.

Recommendation

The information set out in the statement of purpose is an essential part of the process of agreement between the registered person and placing authority that a placement in that home is the right one for that child, and that the home will be able to respond effectively to the child's assessed needs.

('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.6)

This relates to the need to make the type of care and how it will be delivered clearer. In particular, the statement of purpose needs to provide information about how staff will provide individualised, high-quality care both on site and off site (for periods when children are being cared for away from the home).

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1245565

Registered provider: Esland North Limited

Registered provider address: Esland Ltd, Suites 1 & 5 Riverside Business Centre, Foundry Lane, Milford, Belper, Derbyshire DE56 0RN

Responsible individual: James Barlow

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Corrinne Barker, Social Care Inspector
Alison Marshall, Social Care Inspector

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