

SC430320

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

A private company operates this home for up to five children. The statement of purpose states that the home provides care for children who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and/or learning difficulties.

The home was registered with Ofsted in August 2011. The registered manager was registered with Ofsted in November 2016.

Visit dates: 10 to 11 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 2 October 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be 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

The home has managed the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic well and created a safe 'bubble'. Rigorous safety procedures, including regularly checking the temperatures of those who live and work in the home, are understood and respected by staff and young people.

Staff have worked hard to explain to young people the dangers posed by COVID-19 and the changing restrictions. Young people have enjoyed safe, exclusive use of an outside activity centre during the lockdown period.

Staff know and understand each young person well. They recognise the behaviours or events that unsettle young people, and they intervene quickly to manage their challenging behaviour(s) effectively.

Young people enjoy a broad range of activities, and they value the close relationships that they share with staff. One young person spoke with fondness of a recent sports day activity, and of his pride at receiving a medal. Outings and key work activities, such as cake baking, are warmly recorded in life-story books.

Social workers, advocates and keyworkers provided positive feedback and clearly recognised the improvements in young people's behaviours. One social worker described staff as 'consistently child centred and attentive'. Parents spoke of the ease of contact arrangements and of a sense of 'working' with the home on issues such as modelling boundaries.

All the young people are presently accessing some form of education. Progress is carefully monitored. Staff challenge professionals appropriately to provide young people with additional resources, or to change the type of provision if difficulties occur.

The safety of children

High staffing levels help to keep young people safe. Staff reported feeling confident and reassured by a strong, supportive team dynamic that allows them to manage the challenging behaviours of young people effectively.

Staff have the confidence to challenge sensitive issues. For example, staff conducted a keywork session with a young person to remind him of the impact of making racially motivated comments to peers at school.

The home advocates proactively for young people. Recently, the home contacted the children's commissioner to air concerns regarding the transition planning for a young person. Such strong advocacy allowed the young person to access a specialist support assessment and the oversight of the court of protection.

Rigorous matching procedures create a sense of community in the home. Staff meet with young people prior to admission and carefully assess compatibility with other young people currently living in the home. Successful matching is evidenced by the positive relationships shared between young people and staff.

Consent for the use of close circuit television is not evidenced. The home does not clearly explain to young people that close circuit television use occurs in the communal areas of home.

Leaders and managers

The management of the home is stable. The registered manager, who is also the provider, has recruited an experienced interim manager and is presently planning to hand over responsibility for the home. The interim manager previously worked at the home, and the handover is envisaged to last at least six months to ensure a smooth transition.

Planning for the pandemic has been effective. Managers have used the lockdown period as a window for strengthening the team dynamic and developing a sense of community in the home. Managers identified additional space in an adjoining property to support young people who may contract the virus and require isolation.

Managers are reflective and have addressed four requirements from the last inspection. Two recommendations have been made from this assurance visit. It was not possible to review the remaining requirements at this visit.

The home security has been improved, and new procedures are in place for the monitoring of young people.

Staffing levels have been increased alongside an improvement in staff retention. New team leaders offer staff additional support and guidance.

Staff said they feel that supportive training and supervision offers them an opportunity to grow and develop. Two support workers have recently moved to become trainee team leaders.

Managers have a suitable oversight of the running of the home. However, the management monitoring reports, completed in line with Regulation 45, do not fully evidence young people's feedback.

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
Medicines	01/01/2021

<p>The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23 (1))</p> <p>Ensure an accurate record is kept of the balance of controlled drugs.</p>	
<p>Behaviour management policies and records</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, and;</p> <p>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. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(c))</p>	01/01/2021
<p>Statement of purpose</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. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b))</p> <p>In particular, the 'Working Together' guidance quoted must be the most up to date.</p>	01/01/2021

Recommendations

- The registered person must ensure that recruitment of staff safeguards children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1). In particular, the reasons for appointing staff must be clear.
- Ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4). In particular, ensure that the duration of restraints and a child's admission date and heritage are included in records, and ensure that the language used in records promotes children's dignity.
- Ensure that consent is given in writing to any monitoring or surveillance at the time of placement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards (2015)', page 15, paragraph 3.16). In particular, the home must ensure that the children's guide clearly explains that surveillance is in place, and, where possible, to seek consent from young people.

- Ensure the registered person oversees the welfare of the children in their care through observation and engagement with each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23). In particular, feedback from young people needs to be evidenced in the management monitoring report.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC430320

Registered provider: The Vine Residential Services (TVRS) Ltd.

Registered provider address: The Granary, Studio 4, 1st Floor, 80 Abbey Road, Barking, Essex IG11 7BT

Responsible individual: Brenda Andrews

Registered manager: Audrey Joseph

Inspector

Barnaby Dowell, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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