

SC487702

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a private company. The home is registered to provide care for up to three children who have difficulty in managing their emotions and behaviour. A new manager is in post and registered with Ofsted in April 2020.

**Visit dates:** 15 to 16 September 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 10 March 2020

**Previous inspection judgement:** Improved 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**

The home cares for children who have experienced significant trauma and present with complex risk-taking behaviours. The manager works hard to ensure that children are well prepared for the move to the home. Children are visited before they come to live at the home and the manager is tenacious in gathering information from relevant professionals. At the time of the visit, one child was living at the home. Two children moved on from the home during the time of lockdown.

The children's guide has been adapted for children who have limited reading ability. Children choose the colour scheme of their bedrooms and receive welcome packs on arrival. A social worker and a parent both said that they are very pleased with the lengths to which the staff go in welcoming a new child into the home.

The manager ensures that when a child moves on, the staff keep in regular contact and offer ongoing support. This is valued by the children and lets them know that they are cared about.

The staff understand the value of education. A dedicated education lead puts together a weekly timetable of activities for children who are not attending school. The staff arrange activities for the children. The child who lives at the home goes to a local rugby club and martial arts group. Joining in with sports activities helps children to remain healthy and form positive friendships.

Children are supported to keep in touch with family members. Face-to-face contact with family members has been arranged safely during the pandemic. Visitors are warmly welcomed into the home.

The staff work hard to build positive relationships with the children. However, the home regularly employs agency staff, which has an impact on children receiving consistent care. The child talked about finding it hard adjusting to lots of different adults coming and going. Inconsistent care does not enable children to develop a strong sense of trust in the adults who care for them.

The staff work hard to meet children's individual needs. Vegetarian meals are prepared for the child, who does not eat meat. The staff have information about being deaf-aware to help them communicate with this child.

## **The safety of children**

The children's behaviour is challenging due to their past trauma. One child self-harms and other children have been involved in criminal behaviour. Sometimes, children cause damage to the home and put themselves and others at risk.

A window that was broken by a child in June 2020 had not been replaced at the time of the visit. Although most of the glass had been removed, sharp glass edges of the safety glass remained. Exposed broken glass poses a risk to children's safety. Although the manager confirmed that there was a delay in obtaining glass due to

the pandemic, at the time of the assurance visit, no actual order had been placed to replace it. This has since been addressed and a glazier is now booked to undertake the work.

Children have individual risk assessments. Staff receive training in safeguarding. The location risk assessment has been updated and the staff are aware of the risks to children. During their placements, some children have been involved in criminal behaviour in the community and vulnerable to exploitation. The staff undertake key-work sessions with the children to address these issues when they arise.

Children regularly go missing from the home. One child reduced their number of missing episodes because of the support that they received from the staff to feel welcome at the home. Staff actively look for children when they leave the home without permission, and close liaison with the local police helps to keep children safer.

The staff restrained a child who was trying to climb out of a first-floor window. The use of restraint was appropriate to prevent the child from harming herself. However, the records of this restraint did not detail important information about the technique used or the duration of the hold. The child's views about the restraint were not sought and there was no evidence presented to confirm that a management review of the incident had taken place. Follow-up work had been undertaken with the staff, but failure to record important information following a restraint and a lack of evidence of a management review of these incidents does not provide clarity on how practice is monitored to ensure children's safety.

Children know how to complain. The manager reviews any complaints and explains the outcome to the children.

## **Leaders and managers**

At the last full inspection, the home was judged requires improvement to be good. In March 2020, Ofsted judged that the home had improved effectiveness at the interim inspection. Although there were several incidents, during the period of lockdown due to the coronavirus, the manager responded appropriately and has taken forward lessons learned. The result of this has been an improvement to the matching and admissions process to ensure that the home can meet the needs of children who are admitted. The manager fully met one of the requirements set at the last inspection and she has made progress towards meeting the second requirement. However, further improvement is required in this area. Four requirements have been raised at this assurance visit.

The manager sets high standards for herself and the staff. She is committed to delivering good-quality care and wants the children to achieve good outcomes. External professionals said that they are kept up to date with the children's progress. A parent praised the manager for her reliability.

Independent monitoring of the service has continued during the pandemic and remote technology has been used when face-to-face visits have not been possible during lockdown. This monitoring means that the children have been able to talk to an adult outside the home about the care that they received during the pandemic.

Allegations are investigated and escalated in line with child protection procedures. The manager applies learning from the outcome of investigations to inform future practice and shares this learning with the team. Additional supervision and training are arranged when things go wrong. These processes have helped the staff to understand what is expected of them.

There are two vacancies in the staff team. Managers are trying to recruit permanent staff. There are no plans to admit another child into the home until these posts are filled. This will reduce the number of agency staff working at the home.

Recruitment checks on agency staff have been delegated to the agency. The manager does not view the employment history or references of agency staff coming to work at the home. This lack of oversight could leave a child vulnerable to being cared for by unsuitable individuals.

## 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 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 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. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(d))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that broken windows and other hazards are promptly addressed.</p>	08/10/2020
<p>The registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children's home does not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. (Regulation 31(1))</p>	29/10/2020

<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;</p> <p>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).</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, ensure that comprehensive checks are made on agency staff.</p>	<p>29/10/2020</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>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—</p> <p>a description of the measure and its duration;</p> <p>details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;</p> <p>the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and</p> <p>a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure;</p> <p>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')—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and</p> <p>has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p>	<p>08/10/2020</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)(iii)(iv)(v)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))</p>	
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## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** SC487702

**Registered provider:** Fonjocks Social Work Practice Limited

**Registered provider address:** Orchard House, 1 Old Convent Orchard, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 3PQ

**Responsible individual:** Miguel Valerio

**Registered manager:** Misha Tricker

## Inspector

Angela Weston, Social Care Inspector

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