

1272209

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

This five-bedded home was registered in April 2018. It provides care for children who have experienced traumatic childhoods and require support in a nurturing, structured and therapeutic environment.

**Visit dates:** 22 to 23 September 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 1 July 2019

**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**

Children are well cared for, in a welcoming and nurturing home. Professionals confirm that children are making progress. Children say that the home is good and that they have everything they need.

Children have somebody at the home that they can talk to. Children know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy. However, staff have not always ensured that other important people, such as social workers, are informed that a complaint has been made.

During the pandemic, the children have been involved in a variety of educational activities, such as helping at a farm. Children are engaging in education packages and making progress.

Children have regular health checks and staff encourage them to lead healthy lifestyles. For example, children now have better bedtime routines, which make it easier for them to achieve good attendance at their education placement.

Children are supported to maintain contact with people who are important to them. Staff work with other agencies to make sure that the contact is safe. For some children, well-supported family contact has increased the potential that children can return to the care of their families.

## **The safety of children**

Over time, children go missing from the home less often. This improves their safety. Also, children who have been known to be involved in criminal activity have been supported to reduce these behaviours. Missing from care return interviews have not been tracked. As a result, important information may be missed by the staff.

Safeguarding incidents have been reported, recorded and referred to appropriate safeguarding agencies. On the whole, safeguarding agencies say that there is good communication from the home and state that children are supported to stay safe. There has, however, been one incident where relevant contact was not made with the local authority designated officer.

Risk assessments lack detail. Children are not always given the support needed early on to help them understand the consequences of their behaviour. Risk assessments do not clearly identify the needs of the young people or the measures by which they will be supported to be safe.

Matching risk assessments are in place and reduce any potential risks between children. At times, a separate annex is used to accommodate a child who might not be a good match with other residents. However, risk assessments have not always identified strategies to support children to interact appropriately in shared areas, such as the garden.

## Leaders and managers

The home is operating with an acting manager because the registered manager recently left. Staff, many of whom are new, require support to develop consistent strategies to manage challenging situations and behaviours effectively. However, the provider has not ensured that all staff receive regular supervision. This has improved in the last month.

There is a lack of clear management oversight of the home's records. For instance, a night log stated that children's behaviours were not well managed. The record did not have any management review. Some recording is not good enough, particularly in relation to safeguarding incidents and injuries to children. This does not support effective management oversight of practice.

There has been a delay in identifying a school for one young person, despite her having previously attended education and wanting to attend a school rather than have in-house tuition. This should have been escalated to the virtual school head and local education authorities.

A training programme is in place for staff. The training provides staff with the core skills that they need to support young people. However, the training matrix is unwieldy and makes it difficult to track which staff have completed training.

## 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— that staff—</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>	24/10/2020

<p>(Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(v)(vii))</p> <p>In particular, to ensure that all appropriate safeguarding agencies are referred to when appropriate and that there is clear recording of these contacts.</p>	
<p>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>seek to involve each child’s placing authority effectively in the child’s care, in accordance with the child’s relevant plans;</p> <p>seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child’s needs;</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; and</p> <p>seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children’s home is to provide care and accommodation.</p> <p>(Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c)(d))</p> <p>In particular, escalation when there are delays in children accessing education that is potentially impacting on their care plan and outcomes.</p>	<p>01/10/2020</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 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>24/10/2020</p>

ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child.

(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a) and (e))

In particular, that there is strength in the management oversight of the home and stability and consistency of the staff team.

## Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)  
In particular, ensure that records are completed fully with attention to detail and accuracy.
- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. The Statement of Purpose is an important document in the process of care planning as it sets out the needs of children the home is set up and equipped to care for. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. Professionally qualified staff employed by the home, e.g. teachers or social workers, should be provided with relevant professional or clinical supervision by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- All children must have access to appropriate advocacy support, and where possible this should be provided by a person that the child chooses. Looked-after children are entitled to an independent advocate to advise them and ensure they have the support needed to express their views, wishes and feelings about their care and lives. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 4.16)

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 1272209

**Registered provider:** Discovered Limited

**Registered provider address:** 4-4a Blackburn Road, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 1HD

**Responsible individual:** Thomas Mayer

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspectors

Bev Allison, Social Care Inspector  
Alison Marshall, Social Care Inspector

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