

1240936

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It is one of four operated under a contract with a large local authority. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three young people who may have experienced trauma, placement and family breakdown.

The manager has been in post since March 2020 and has submitted her application to be registered with Ofsted. She is in the process of completing her level 5 qualification in leadership and management.

Visit dates: 6 to 7 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 20 February 2020

Previous inspection judgement: sustained 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

There is currently one young person living in the home. Staff provide him with good-quality and individualised care to meet his needs.

The young person's views are known and understood by staff. Key-work sessions and day-to-day discussions provide him with opportunities to influence the care he receives. Staff take the young person's requests into account when planning his care.

Staff have followed the national guidance that was put in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At times, this has meant that staff have needed to be creative in helping the young person to remain in touch with people who are important to him.

The young person attends college and is enjoying his course. The young person told the inspector that staff had helped and guided him on choosing what college course to take.

The young person has been engaged in a range of activities. During the lockdown period, the staff ensured that he was kept busy in the home by providing him with the opportunity to become involved in a range of projects. This included sessions on a range of topics, including Black Lives Matter, mental health awareness and understanding COVID-19. This planning ensured that the young person adhered to the COVID-19 restrictions while still having fun and learning.

Staff help the young person to maintain good physical and mental health by promoting a balanced diet and exercise. They provide support when the young person needs to see medical practitioners.

The safety of children

Staff have a good understanding of the young person's vulnerabilities and the potential for him to place himself at risk of harm. The manager ensures that there are a range of risk assessments in place, and she updates these regularly. Risk assessments are of a good quality and provide staff with details about the historical context of the young person's behaviours.

The young person's risk-taking behaviours have decreased. For example, there are no longer incidents of him going missing from home.

The manager has considered the needs of the young person already living in the home when considering whether new young people should be admitted to the

home. This has included seeking the views of the young person currently living in the home.

The manager and staff use internal door alarms both during the day and at night to monitor the movements of the young person in the home. This impacts upon the child's privacy and is not proportionate or necessary.

The young person has caused a significant amount of damage to the home on more than one occasion. Staff do not currently support the young person to engage in targeted work with specialist agencies to manage his anger. As a result, the young person is at risk of being criminalised when he leaves the home as he has not been supported to understand the potential consequences of his behaviour. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that the young person receives care which equips and prepares him for adult life. The young person's independent reviewing officer told the inspector that he had also raised this issue with the manager and staff.

Staff use their relationships with the young person to engage and de-escalate behaviour wherever possible. Staff have not used physical intervention for over six months.

In most instances, the manager ensures that staff are safely recruited. However, on one occasion, the manager has not assured herself that an employee was suitable to undertake the role applied for. The absence of a risk assessment means that the manager's rationale for employing the member of staff is unclear.

Leaders and managers

The manager, who is new to the role, appears to be having a positive influence on the home. Because of her leadership, staff are more consistent in their approach and better equipped to meet the needs of young people.

The staff team includes a core group of experienced staff. Other staff who are less experienced are given additional support and guidance to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of young people. The staff team say that they feel very supported by the manager.

The manager has been proactive in ensuring that all new staff undertake the organisation's 24-week induction programme. This is designed to ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to undertake their role within their probationary period. Where training has not been able to take place due to COVID-19, the manager has arranged for staff to access online training. This enables staff to update their knowledge and skills to meet the needs of children.

Throughout the pandemic, the independent visitor has continued to provide external scrutiny. The manager has acted swiftly to rectify any shortfalls.

The manager has been proactive in assessing risks in relation to COVID-19. She has put measures in place to reduce risks to the young person in the home. Staff have

supported this by working double shifts to reduce traffic within the home. They have acted to reduce the risk of any cross-contamination and the potential for young people to contract the virus.

The manager uses topic-specific supervisions to address issues with staff. This allows for detailed exploration of a particular topic or performance issue. However, when such supervisions are completed, they do not include a wider discussion about the staff's performance that would normally be covered in a supervision session. This is a missed opportunity to identify and address staff performance issues and areas of development. The frequency in which standard and topic-specific supervisions are completed is inconsistent.

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
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on mutual respect and trust and an understanding about acceptable behaviour. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(iii))	27/11/2020
The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that arrangements are in place to plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(2)(b)(iii))	27/11/2020
The registered person must ensure that any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	27/11/2020

Recommendations

- As set out in regulations 31-33, the registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1240936

Registered provider: Meadows Care Limited

Registered provider address: Meadows Care Ltd, Egerton House, Wardle Road, Rochdale, Lancashire OL12 9EN

Responsible individual: Lara Elsegood

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Annemarie Parker, Social Care Inspector
Ann-Marie Jones, Social Care Inspector

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