

SC368032

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This privately-owned children's home provides care for up to three children who may have experienced trauma. Such trauma may mean that children experience social and emotional difficulties.

There has been no registered manager since July 2019. One manager was appointed and left before he was registered with Ofsted. A new manager has been in post since February 2020 and has applied to Ofsted to register.

Visit dates: 8 to 9 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 2 October 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Declined in 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 identified the following serious concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- The manager and staff do not understand and manage the potential risks to a child when he is away from the home and his whereabouts are unknown.
- Insufficient work is being undertaken by staff and the manager to help the child learn how to keep safe and how his behaviour impacts on himself and other people.
- The manager and staff do not work proactively with the child to help him engage in constructive activities, develop appropriate daily routines and adhere to boundaries. As a result, staff have missed opportunities to promote the child's welfare, development and safety.
- Although the manager and staff have undertaken a range of training, they are not implementing their knowledge to safeguard the child.
- Managers and staff are not yet working effectively with partner agencies to provide the child with coordinated care.

The care of children

One child lives at the home and has recently moved in. Although the manager and staff have taken some steps to encourage the child to develop routines and engage in activities, these steps do not go far enough to help him to settle in and develop positive relationships with them.

The child has engaged in some activities for example, he has baked a cake and engaged in some musical activities with staff. However, when the child is reluctant to engage with staff, the staff have not done enough to understand the child's wishes, feelings and interests and engage him in constructive activities more often. Consequently, the child is spending long periods of the day away from the home and his whereabouts are often unknown. This does not promote his welfare, development or safety.

The child has attended school sporadically since the start of the new term. On days when the child tells staff that he intends not to go to school, this has not been effectively challenged. The child has subsequently not attended school on specific days. As a result, the child is not being helped to understand the expectations around school attendance and the importance of doing so.

The home has undergone repairs and decoration to improve the environment. However, the child's room lacks personalisation, and staff are not working proactively with the child to help him invest in his bedroom and make it more comfortable and welcoming.

The objectives set out in the child's placement plan are not clearly set out and lack detail. In addition, it is not clear how staff are working to implement and achieve key areas to help the child make good progress and stay safe.

The safety of children

The manager and staff do not fully understand risk and do not act effectively in order to keep the child safe. The child's risk assessment and behaviour management plan details known risks in relation to offending behaviour and concerns relating to gang affiliation. Despite this, the manager has shown little professional curiosity about, or insight into, the risk the child may face in the local community and how staff would need to work with the child and others to reduce this risk.

The child is not well supported by staff to help him understand how his behaviours, choices and some relationships can be harmful or exploitative and have an impact on himself and other people. This does not promote his safety and welfare.

When the child spends long periods of time away from the home, the manager and staff do not take effective action to assure themselves that he is safe and well. Although the staff contact the child by phone every two hours, they do not make any efforts to look for him to ascertain his whereabouts and understand who he is spending time with. This shows a lack of care and concern for a child who is vulnerable to risk of harm.

There is no clear missing from home plan, despite the high levels of risk and vulnerability the child presents. In addition, there is little evidence of the manager working effectively and proactively with other professionals involved in the child's life, including the youth offending worker, social worker and police to safeguard him and others.

The location risk assessment lacks meaningful information about the potential risks and hotspots in nearby areas. Given the needs and vulnerabilities of the child living at the home, this is unhelpful. It shows a lack of insight into his needs and vulnerabilities. In addition, it means that there is a lack of information to guide staff in their support of, and work with, the child to keep him safe from harm when out in the community.

Leaders and managers

The manager does not have insight into the skills and experience of staff when considering the needs of children before they have moved into the home. As such, staff are unable to understand what they need to do to keep the child safe.

Since the last monitoring visit, staff and the manager have undertaken a wealth of training on key issues such as understanding risk, knife-crime, gang affiliation and child exploitation. However, neither the manager nor staff are implementing the knowledge they have gained, to manage and reduce the risks the child is

presenting. As a result, the manager's understanding of the effectiveness of training undertaken by staff on the quality of care provided is weak.

Although, several professionals are involved in the child's life, the manager has not ensured that they are working collaboratively to meet the child's needs and safeguard him. As a result, the child is not receiving well-planned and coordinated care.

The manager has not followed safer recruitment processes. Concerns raised by a previous employer about a staff member have not been adequately followed up. Instead, the home's manager took the staff member's explanation at face value and did not take reasonable steps to verify their account about what had happened. This is not safe practice.

A member of staff has now enrolled on the level 3 diploma qualification. Although they are yet to complete this within the required timescale, she is looking to complete the course as soon as practicable. All other staff have completed their level 3 diploma or are undertaking the qualification.

One compliance notice has been issued following this inspection, along with a notice restricting the accommodation of new children to the home.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs. (Regulation 5(b))	25 October 2020
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—	25 October 2020

ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(i))	
<p>The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff help each child to—</p> <p>develop the child's interests and hobbies;</p> <p>that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child's interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9 (1)(2)(a)(i)(b))</p>	25 October 2020
<p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p> <p>positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding;</p> <p>help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful;</p> <p>strive to gain each child's respect and trust. (Regulation 11(1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(v)(vi)(viii))</p>	25 October 2020
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.	04 October 2020

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(vi))*</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>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child</p> <p>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. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(c))</p>	<p>25 October 2020</p>
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home. (Regulation 14(1)(a))</p>	<p>25 October 2020</p>
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children’s safety. (Regulation 32 (1))</p>	<p>25 October 2020</p>
<p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>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</p>	<p>30 March 2021</p>

<p>that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform;</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained—</p> <p>the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or</p> <p>a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma.</p> <p>The relevant date is—</p> <p>in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or</p> <p>in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016. (Regulation 32(2)(a)(b)(3)(b)(4)(a)(b)(5)(a)(b))</p>	
<p>The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard).</p> <p>When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46 (1)(2))</p>	<p>25 October 2020</p>

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC368032

Registered provider: Constant Child Care Limited

Registered provider address: 4 Parkside Court, Greenhough Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 7FE

Responsible individual: Barry Edwards

Registered manager: Post Vacant

Inspector

Shazana Jamal, Social Care Inspector

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