

1225887

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

A private company owns this home. The statement of purpose states that care and accommodation are provided for up to two children, aged from eight to 18, who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

There has been no registered manager since 30 June 2019.

Visit dates: 22 to 23 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 4 August 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Not judged

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.

A monitoring visit took place on 24 June 2020. This arose from concerns about key staff not considering all the information in assessment reports to inform the placement planning for children. The shortfalls identified had the potential to put children at risk.

Consequently, a compliance notice was issued on 2 July 2020 in relation to regulation 12, the protection of children standard. The provider was required to take the necessary steps to meet the compliance notice by 2 August 2020.

A further monitoring visit took place on 4 August 2020. The compliance notice in relation to regulation 12 was not met, and therefore reissued. The provider was required to take the necessary steps to meet the compliance notice by 20 September 2020. Three requirements were also made in relation to regulations 5, 13 and 27.

A restriction of accommodation notice was served to cover the period 11 August 2020 until 2 October 2020 inclusive.

This assurance visit was also used to check the provider's compliance with the restriction of accommodation notice, to review the provider's progress in meeting the steps of the compliance notice, and to review the previous requirements.

Findings from the visit

We identified the following serious and/or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Leaders and managers have failed to meet in full the compliance notice that was issued from the previous monitoring inspection of 24 June 2020 and that was reissued following the monitoring inspection on 4 August 2020.
- In failing to undertake a comprehensive audit of the staff team's skills and competencies, leaders do not understand the deficits that they need to address and support for the workforce, to ensure that safe and effective care will be provided for children, in the event of the restriction notice being lifted.

The care of children

Staff remain focused on providing nurturing care to the one young person living in the home. Staff work well with other agencies, such as child and adolescent mental health services and the young person's social worker. Staff use the guidance of such professionals in the young person's care planning.

Consequently, the young person is making progress. The young person's relationship with their family has significantly improved and the young person now engages consistently with a home tutor.

Leaders have not used this period of minimal occupancy effectively. Their failure to thoroughly review the staff team's skills and competencies, and take effective action to remedy any deficits, means that they remain unassured of the team's ability to deliver safe and effective care in accordance with the statement of purpose.

The safety of children

There have been no safeguarding issues or incidents of challenging behaviour since the last inspection and senior staff have addressed the previous concerns about risk management.

However, the ongoing failure of leaders to undertake a full and thorough review of the staff team's skills and competencies means that potential gaps remain unidentified. This presents increasing delays to assuring that any staff training has been effective. It delays the identification of any further meaningful training that is required for staff individually and collectively. This presents risks for children who may move into the home in the future, whose needs may not be within the staff team's skill set.

During the on-site element of this visit, staff were observed to follow safe working practices in respect of COVID-19. They have provided information to the young person in ways that take into account their abilities and understanding. Consequently, the young person has completed a project on this topic.

Leaders and managers

Senior leaders have conducted a review of the staff's skills. However, the review is lacking in quality, scope, depth and follow-up. Significant deficits include their failure to consider the staff team's competence and knowledge of emerging personality disorder, despite reassurance in family court proceedings that staff would be suitably trained in this area. Leaders did not consider the previous experience of staff who have worked in other settings.

The planned advanced behaviour management training did not take place. Senior leaders do not have plans to train staff who have missed the training. Staff told the inspector of their training needs that contradicted the senior leader's assessment of their training needs. The subsequent outcome from the review is not a convincing conclusion of staff's skills and competencies.

Senior managers have taken advice from other professionals, including the police and senior personnel within social services. They have written a protocol for a permissible intervention as directed by a court order. They have purchased specialist equipment to keep everyone safe should staff need to follow the protocol in practice. The previous requirement, made under regulation 5, is therefore met.

Although plans are advanced in the recruitment of a manager, there has not been a manager registered with Ofsted since 30 June 2019. The requirement made under regulation 27 is not met and is therefore repeated.

Senior leaders accept the failings in senior management. They have plans to introduce a new management structure with clear lines of the responsibilities of the registered manager and the responsible individual. However, they have currently been unsuccessful in recruiting to either role. They have plans to introduce a

referrals/admissions process with the same accountability. The new structure and policy are not yet in place and remain untested in practice. The previous requirement, in relation to regulation 13, is therefore repeated.

Following the findings of this assurance visit, the compliance notice in relation to regulation 12 is reissued. The restriction of accommodation notice is extended, and Ofsted will consider next steps.

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>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(iii))</p>	08/11/2020
<p>The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if—</p> <p>there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and</p> <p>the registered provider—</p> <p>is an organisation or a partnership. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)(b)(i))</p>	08/11/2020
<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>	08/11/2020

ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b))	
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*This requirement is subject to a compliance notice.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1225887

Registered provider: Benecare Limited

Registered provider address: 113a St Johns Hill, Sevenoaks TN13 3PE

Responsible individual: Sean Sullivan

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Keith Riley, Social Care Inspector

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