

1254780

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children who may have faced adverse childhood experiences resulting in trauma.

The acting manager has been in post for five weeks and intends to apply to Ofsted to be registered.

Visit dates: 13 to 14 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 12 June 2018

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be 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 identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Risk assessments do not accurately identify risk. This means staff are not always given clear guidance on the best strategies to manage known risks.
- The agreed strategies to manage known risks to children are not always completed or documented by staff. This undermines their effectiveness.
- Children move into the home despite staff not having the skills to meet their needs.
- Staff lack the requisite skills, experience and knowledge to successfully manage children's behaviours.
- Senior management oversight of the home has been ineffective. This means that children have not received care that is in line with the homes statement of purpose.

The care of children

Children say that staff spend a limited amount of time with them and that they feel like they are not listened to. This means that some children do not think that their opinions are valued. This view is compounded by the fact that when children make complaints, staff do not act on them appropriately. Because of this, children struggle to build positive and trusting relationships with staff.

One child reported that they did not feel well cared for. The child was particularly upset that staff had recently failed to celebrate her birthday as planned. Although staff had belatedly tried to make up for this, the child was disappointed by the thoughtlessness of the staff.

In contrast, one child said that he felt settled in the home. The child told inspectors that he liked his bedroom and that he enjoyed looking after his pet guinea pigs, which were brought for him by staff.

Managers do not appropriately consider the needs of children prior to them moving into the home. Because of this, children's needs and risks are not always compatible with those children already living in the home. Furthermore, children move into the home despite staff not having the skills to meet their needs. As a result, some children have been unable to remain in the home as planned and have had to be moved to alternative placements. This is unsettling for those children and causes them further instability.

Staff have a poor understanding of the children's emotional and mental health needs. This means that staff do not always respond appropriately to children's behaviour. This issue is exacerbated by the inconsistent boundaries put in place by

staff. Because of this, staff are ineffective at managing children's behaviours and children are not helped to understand their own feelings or to learn how to express them safely.

Children have returned to school following the restrictions that were initially put in place as a result of COVID-19. In preparation for this, staff completed key work sessions with children to help them understand their new routines. As a result, children have settled well and are enjoying going to school.

The safety of children

Risk assessments do not accurately identify risk. This means staff are not always given clear guidance on how to manage known risks. Furthermore, staff are not knowledgeable about the content of the risk assessments. This contributes to a disorganised approach to keeping children safe.

One child is identified as being at high risk of self-harm. Strategies to manage this risk, including the completion of room checks, are not always completed or documented. This leaves children unsafe and without the emotional support they need.

Inspectors identified that children's bedroom doors could not be unlocked by staff when they were locked from the inside. This means that in an emergency, staff would be unable to enter children's bedrooms. During the inspection, managers acted swiftly to change the locks.

Staff do not always act to ensure that children are found quickly when they go missing. This is because staff have received conflicting advice and guidance from managers on what they should do. Furthermore, when children do return home, return home interviews and debriefs are not always completed. These are missed opportunities to understand and address the reasons why children have gone missing.

The recording of significant incidents, including actions taken in respect of when children go missing, is poor. This impacts on the manager's oversight and monitoring of these significant events. Because of this, managers and staff have a confused and limited understanding of children's behaviours and how to respond to them.

Leaders and managers

The home does not currently have a registered manager. A new manager has been appointed and has been in post for five weeks. The manager is inexperienced, and it is not yet clear if he has the knowledge and skills to address the concerns identified during this assurance visit.

A new deputy manager has also been recruited and has been in post for one week. The deputy manager is experienced and will add strength to the management team.

Poor oversight and leadership by managers, including the responsible individual, have contributed to the widespread concerns identified during this visit. The responsible individual had completed an audit of the quality of care provided to children prior to the assurance visit. However, the audit failed to identify the full extent of the shortfalls in the care provided to children. This does not demonstrate effective leadership and management skills.

External monitoring by the independent visitor has not provided managers with an accurate insight into the ability of managers and staff to promote children's welfare and keep them safe.

Due to the gaps in knowledge of senior managers and the poor quality of the independent visitor reports, the new manager has not been adequately supported to identify and address significant concerns in the care provided to children. The new manager, who is keen and solution focused, has had limited time to implement required changes.

Notwithstanding this, it is a concern that the new manager does not yet have a sufficient understanding of the children's individual needs and levels of risk. For example, the manager did not know when one child had last self-harmed. However, during the course of the inspection, the manager took steps to begin reviewing and improving children's risk assessments to assure himself of the safeguards in place to protect them.

Staff lack the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the children. This is because managers have not ensured that staff have access to the required training. At the time of the inspection, mandatory training for staff and managers was planned to take place within two weeks.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—	30/11/2020
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—	

<p>ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>(Regulation 6 (1)(c)(i))</p>	
<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; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff—</p> <p>meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; 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; understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children;</p> <p>(Regulation 11 (a)(b)(c)(2)(1)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(ix)(xi))</p>	<p>30/11/2020</p>
<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— (a) that staff— 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>30/10/2020</p>

<p>help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; (Regulation 12 (2)(1)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(b))</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 (b) 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; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; 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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (a)(b)(2)(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(i)(ii)(h))</p>	<p>30/10/2020</p>

<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>(Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b))</p>	<p>30/11/2020</p>
<p>When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person—</p> <p>if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and</p> <p>to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires.</p> <p>(Regulation 44 (2)(a)(b))</p>	<p>30/11/2020</p>

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1254780

Registered provider: Silverlining Childcare Limited

Registered provider address: 1 Flaxhall Street, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 9TW

Responsible individual: Tanya Humphries

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sarah Berry, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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