

1232200

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned. It provides care and accommodation for three young people who may have experienced neglect, abuse or trauma, which has left them vulnerable.

The registered manager left in May 2020.

Visit dates: 20 to 21 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 18 November 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

There is one child currently living at the home. Three children have moved out since 1 April 2020. One child, who moved into the home at the start of the COVID-19 lockdown period, was unable to have family contact or education as planned due to the pandemic. She left in an unplanned way because the lockdown restrictions made the placement untenable. Another child made a planned transition to semi-independence with staff's support.

The staff provide an excellent structure and routine. One child receives daily education from a tutor. The child is engaging very well and working above his expected levels. Recently, the home had to restrict visitors and lock the home down. During this time, a tutor provided virtual lessons with staff's support, which worked very well. The tutor and the staff have maintained the child's routines and provided continuous education despite the challenges presented by COVID-19. This consistency has built the child's confidence and ability to learn.

The children are supported to see their family and friends regardless of travel and distance. During the time of no visitors, children kept in touch with their families using video calls. The staff assist with travel to enable children's family members to visit the home, helping children to maintain important family relationships.

Although there have been changes to staffing and a change of manager, there is a core group of staff that the children know and trust. The staff spend time with children, helping them to understand the limitations because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This reduces children's fear and anxiety.

The safety of children

The staff have managed an unsettled period during which the children became frustrated with one another. The lack of activities during lockdown added to the frustrations. A spate of incidents in the lockdown period related to children leaving the home and tense dynamics between the children.

Two children have now left the home and the remaining child has benefited greatly from being alone. Consequently, there has been a significant reduction in incidents. There are some behavioural difficulties, and these are managed effectively. The staff use the strategies outlined in the child's behaviour management plan. The staff are aware of likely triggers and provide lots of one-to-one support. This helps the child to learn and reflect on better ways of coping. However, when imposing negative consequences, the staff have been repetitive in their use of device removal or television time. The consequences do not relate to the child's behaviour. Consequently, the child is not helped to understand the impact of their behaviour or to understand the consequences.

The manager has managed an allegation about a member of staff safely, with good scrutiny from the designated officer and using the guidance of the senior

management team. The staff are actively encouraged to think about whistle-blowing and feel confident to raise practice concerns or safeguarding matters.

Leaders and managers

The senior management team has appointed the previously registered manager, who left the home for two months to manage another home. The manager is experienced and qualified, with a good track record of managing this home.

The interim management arrangements resulted in poor managerial oversight and inconsistencies. The lockdown period, staff illness and the management changes have had an impact on staff's morale. However, the manager is using her experience and knowledge of the home to implement changes and improve systems of working.

Independent monitoring continued throughout lockdown on a virtual basis and face-to-face visits have since resumed. The independent visitor raises pertinent points and identified poor monitoring during the lockdown period. Internal monitoring has significantly improved with the managerial change. The previous requirements have all been met and this has improved the quality of care.

The staff team has faced several challenges. Following the national lockdown, the staff had to self-isolate after a positive case of COVID-19 at the home. This was managed well, without any spread of infection. Staff worked a high number of hours throughout the isolation period to reduce the infection footprint at the home and ensure that the child was not at risk.

The manager and deputy manager provide sufficient supervision sessions for the staff. Although these sessions are regular, they fail to fully explore staff's responses and practice concerns, despite these being highlighted in incident reports. This means that staff do not always have the chance to consider their actions and find better ways of managing incidents.

There were several incidents during the lockdown period and under the interim management arrangements that were not notified to Ofsted. This prevented Ofsted from having a clear picture of events at the home and reduced the intended safeguard.

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 registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(4)(b)(c)(e))</p>	31/10/2020

Recommendations

- Staff supervision must enable staff to reflect and act upon how their own feelings and behaviour may be affected by the behaviour of the children they care for. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.15)
- Staff should understand factors that affect children's motivation to behave in a socially acceptable way. Staff should encourage an enthusiasm for positive behaviour through the use of positive behaviour strategies in line with the child's relevant plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.13)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1232200

Registered provider: Total Care Matters Limited

Registered provider address: 230 Bathley Street, The Meadows, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG2 2ER

Responsible individual: Sean Dunne

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Deirdra Keating, Social Care Inspector

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