

1250186

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home provides care for up to four young people. The home specialises in caring for girls who have been subject to child sexual exploitation. A private company owns and operates this home.

A new manager has recently started in post and is in the process of registering with Ofsted.

Visit dates: 15 to 16 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

Children's experiences are mixed. Most children feel happy living in the home and have developed good and trusting relationships with staff. Children benefit from a cosy, well-furnished and welcoming home. A child told the inspector, 'It feels like a family here.' One child, who has recently moved on, did not have a positive experience. A fallout with the other children prompted a move sooner than expected in line with her wishes and wider care plan.

In the main, staff listen to children's wishes and views, which supports their mental well-being. For example, a child asked to be with a certain member of staff during the anniversary of a loved one's death. This request was listened to and acted on, and this support really helped the child to cope with the day and her feelings. Children have the opportunity to share their views and have input into the running of the home. Records from children's meetings with staff do not always show what action has been taken in response to children's views. This is a missed opportunity to have a clear audit trail about how staff respond to children.

Staff have engaged children in a range of activities. During the period of restriction due to COVID-19, children went for walks and played board games with each other and staff. After restrictions were lifted, children have enjoyed different activities with staff, such as swimming and going to the funfair, where one child won a pet goldfish. These experiences have enabled children to build childhood memories.

During lockdown, staff helped the children to stay in touch with their family. Children have benefited from speaking to their loved ones using online technology and, when it has been safe to do so, enjoying face-to-face visits. This support has enabled children to stay in touch with people who are important in their lives.

Children attend the home's on-site school and they continued to do so throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As restrictions have lifted, staff have continued to support children's aspirations and learning. For example, one child is participating in work experience. A child told the inspector that she did not previously attend education but does now that she lives at this home. As a result, she has clear aspirations for her future.

On one occasion, when a child attempted to self-harm, staff did not follow guidance and seek medical advice quickly. Staff did not recognise that a child was at potential risk of harm and this may have compromised the child's welfare.

The safety of children

Children have been helped to understand how to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff have talked to children and have provided simple leaflets to help them understand what is expected of them and others. Consequently, children have felt informed, have developed good personal hygiene routines and understand about social distancing.

On occasion, staff do not deal with aspects of children's challenging behaviour well. For example, staff did not intervene early enough and effectively enough to de-escalate a situation. This resulted in the behaviour of three children becoming heightened over a prolonged period, going missing and being challenging on their return. This incident resulted in the police being called. The manager ensures that reflection does take place to help identify areas where practice can be improved. As a result, staff are beginning to learn from things that happen and this work to upskill staff to effectively manage children's behaviour more consistently is ongoing.

Overall, staff are knowledgeable about children's risks and needs. However, this information is not captured in the children's written records. Children's records and plans are not up to date and key information is missing. This recording issue may lead to inconsistencies in practice and confusion for newer members of staff. In addition, poor recording does not provide an accurate reflection of the quality of care being provided to children.

There was a delay in exploring a child's comments during a physical intervention incident. When it was followed up, the child did not wish to follow up on the concern she raised at the time. Not acting promptly and not sharing information with relevant professionals does not fully protect children's welfare and safety.

Leaders and managers

The manager has worked in the home for three months. She is making steady, positive changes to the way in which children are cared for. The local police and social workers have commented on the improvements that the new manager is bringing to the home. The number of significant incidents has reduced.

The home has a core team of regular staff who provide consistent care for children. Staff have worked overtime to cover holidays and any illness. This has reduced the need for the use of agency staff in the home.

Internal doors were being routinely locked and this had become common practice. However, the manager has started to address this with staff. A recommendation is raised so that this early improvement is fully embedded so that there are no unnecessary restrictions on children's movement around the home.

Although the manager has started to identify some areas for development, her monitoring and oversight is not yet wholly effective. For example, she has not yet addressed the quality of risk assessments and children's placement plans even

though she accepts that these records are not good enough. One member of staff has not obtained her level 3 qualification within the required timescale. In addition, the manager's review of physical interventions is not as timely as needed.

Independent monitoring of the home takes place monthly. These monitoring reports do not pick up on shortfalls to help the development of the home. In addition, reports are not always received by Ofsted in a timely manner, though this has started to improve.

More positively, staff say that they now feel well supported. Supervision for staff is prioritised, with staff receiving regular supervision which is reflective, informative and gives opportunities for staff to learn.

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. 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>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; and</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(iii)(v))</p>	24/11/2020
<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</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p>	24/11/2020

<p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(h))</p>	
<p>The registered person may only— 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 that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform. 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— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— 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 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>23/02/2021</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii))</p>	<p>24/11/20</p>
<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p>	<p>24/11/2020</p>

Recommendations

- Just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Limits on privacy and access may only be put in place to safeguard each child in the home (regulation 21(c)(i)). Any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home and any modifications to the environment of the home, must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. Information on restraint and deprivation of liberty is contained in the protection of children section of the Guide from paragraph 9.41. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10).
- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24).

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1250186

Registered provider: Care 4 Children Residential Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Care 4 Children, 1 Stuart Road, Bredbury Park Industrial Estate, Bredbury, Stockport SK6 2SR

Responsible individual: Samantha Millward

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Louise Battersby, Social Care Inspector

Lisa Mulcahy, Social Care Inspector

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