

1271375

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private provider and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children or young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The home has a registered manager who has been registered since April 2020.

Visit dates: 7 to 8 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 10 March 2020

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:

- Allegations of abuse have not been recognised or reported. This prevents an independent review. This compromises young people's welfare and safety.
- There is ineffective monitoring and review of recent serious incidents in the home. Therefore, there are discrepancies and shortfalls in the recording of serious events.
- Insufficient action has been taken to address previously identified shortfalls. This prevents the home from providing care and accommodation which meets the required standards.
- Staff do not have the necessary training to manage incidents of substance misuse.
- The length and frequency of missing-from-home incidents are increasing significantly. There are serious concerns surrounding the young person's whereabouts and associations during this time.
- Protocols and strategies in place to manage behaviours of concern are not documented. These strategies are also not clear to those working in the home.
- Location risk assessments are not updated to include areas of significant concern. This means that staff are not fully aware of locations that pose a substantial risk to young people's safety.

The care of children

Young people are supported to maintain contact with family and friends. During the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people have been able to take advantage of telephone and video links when face-to-face contact has not been able to take place.

There are two young people living at the home and the inspectors found that one young person is not achieving to their full potential because the home is not managing behaviours of concern effectively. Plans which guide staff to manage behaviours focus upon strategies that are currently not effective due to the young person being frequently missing. This means that the care being delivered does not meet the individual needs of young people.

Educational outcomes for young people are varied. The manager has advocated for one young person and secured a timetable that supports their individual needs. This means that the young person continues to engage and is more likely to succeed. Another young person does not attend education due to frequently being missing from home.

Young people have access to specialist help according to their individual health needs. One young person has a large amount of therapeutic support from internal and external services. This support has continued despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The regular support helps the young person to manage previous trauma and supports them to significantly decrease their self-harming behaviours independently.

Young people receive support with their identity. This is promoted in line with their views and wishes. This means that young people are supported and encouraged to be themselves and are confident in self-expression.

Using good communication and relationship building skills, the staff team has supported one young person to maintain relationships with their family. The quality of this young person's relationships has significantly improved. This is due to the positive and trusting relationship the manager and staff have built with this young person's family.

The safety of children

Safeguarding practice in this home does not always promote the safety and welfare of young people. Staff and managers have failed to act on allegations of abuse in line with child protection policies and procedures. This compromises the safety of young people living in the home and prevents appropriate independent review.

The progress of young people in relation to risk-taking behaviours varies. One young person is making excellent progress in the home and as such, concerns for her safety have decreased. This young person has an individualised and effective safety plan in place. She uses strategies implemented within this plan to help her remain safe and to continue to progress.

Another young person's risks have escalated. There have been concerns raised that he is associating with unsafe adults. These adults are reported to have criminal histories, which could significantly impact upon the young person's safety and well-being. The manager has made some attempts to discuss these concerns in professional meetings, but these concerns have not yet been addressed. Protocols and procedures within risk management plans do not reflect the severity of these concerns.

Behaviour support plans are not fully completed. An example of this is that staff in the home do not have protocols to follow to manage substance misuse or suicidal ideation. These are specific risks for young people currently living in the home. In the event of an incident, staff have no agreed guidance to manage such incidents effectively or consistently, which puts young people at risk of harm. Furthermore, reports that assess the suitability of the home's location are not updated to include landmarks of significant concern. This means that staff do not know the whereabouts of locations that pose a risk to young people's safety.

In relation to the matching of young people in placement, impact risk assessments are robust. These assessments consider all risks posed to young people by placing them together prior to placement agreement.

The home has sensible and manageable procedures in place to manage COVID-19. Young people are aware of these procedures and the risk that COVID-19 poses. They are aware of local restrictions imposed on the home's location and are encouraged to follow government guidelines.

Leaders and managers

The recording of supervisions has improved since the last inspection. Staff feel supported by the manager and enjoy working in the home. Staff report positively on the induction process and are being supported to complete their probationary period.

The provider offers employees a wide range of training as standard. Training offered is generally completed by employees in the appropriate timescales. During this visit, inspectors were unable to view evidence to suggest that any team members have completed substance misuse training. Both young people in placement have a history of substance misuse, including experimentation with substances such as ecstasy and ketamine, as well as frequent cannabis misuse. Therefore, staff working in the home do not have sufficient knowledge to respond to some of the significant needs of the young people placed.

Since the last inspection, there has not been effective action taken to address all of the shortfalls identified. This means that leaders and managers are not responding effectively to improve the experiences, care and safety of young people.

There are gaps in the management oversight and monitoring of the home. The manager has not reviewed some records in the home. An example of this is from a recent incident of missing from home in which the young person was missing for a substantial amount of time. The events documented in response to this incident do not include robust steps taken to visually check the young person's welfare. Furthermore, incidents of restraint require further evaluation to both minimise future incidents and to review the appropriateness of these events.

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, the 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—</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>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>that the effectiveness of the home’s child protection policies is monitored regularly.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(e)) *</p>	<p>20/11/2020</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>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>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p>	<p>20/11/2020</p>

(Regulation 13 (1)(b)(2)(c)(h)) *	
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that the child’s placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child’s relevant plans is requested, if—</p> <p>the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child’s needs;</p> <p>the child is, or has been, persistently absent from the home without permission.</p> <p>(Regulation 14 (1)(a)(2)(f)(i)(ii))</p>	20/11/2020
<p>Restraint in relation to a child is only permitted for the purpose of preventing—</p> <p>injury to any person (including the child);</p> <p>serious damage to the property of any person (including the child); or</p> <p>a child who is accommodated in a secure children’s home from absconding from the home.</p> <p>Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate.</p> <p>(Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2))</p>	20/11/2020
<p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children’s home from abuse or neglect; and</p> <p>sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect.</p>	20/11/2020

<p>The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular—</p> <p>provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located;</p> <p>provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response;</p> <p>describe the measures which may be necessary to protect children following an allegation of abuse or neglect; and</p> <p>describe how and to whom staff are to report, without delay, any concern about abuse or neglect of a child.</p> <p>(Regulation 34 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(d)(e)(f))</p>	
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; or</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.</p> <p>(Regulation 40 (4)(c)(e))</p>	20/11/2020

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1271375

Registered provider: Sandcastle Care Limited

Registered provider address: 49 Whitegate Drive, Blackpool FY3 9DG

Responsible individual: Alan Waters

Registered manager: Zoe Sumner

Inspectors

Claire Deary, Regulatory Inspection Manager
Natalie Bennett, Social Care Inspector

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