

1227335

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

A private provider operates the home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Visit dates: 4 to 5 November 2020

Previous inspection date: 30 July 2019

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 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

Three young people currently live in the home. They have secure, trusting and positive relationships with those caring for them. Young people are understood and feel listened to.

Staff and managers know young people well. They are aware of their needs and provide individualised support. Young people are confident in expressing their views and opinions and are actively encouraged to do so. Documentation in the home does not always reflect the voice that young people have. This means that their views and wishes are not displayed within relevant plans.

Positive relationships are promoted. Staff support young people to keep in touch with family, friends and others who are important to them. Effective planning and organisation have enabled young people to attend events and maintain key relationships throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appropriate and individualised education is sourced for young people. Young people regularly attend and are progressing well in line with their starting points. They have good routines and are working towards suitable qualifications and achievements.

Young people's physical, emotional and mental health needs are a high priority. Referrals are made to relevant agencies and young people are supported to engage. Where young people are reluctant to engage, staff are creative and consistent in challenging this. The relationships formed with young people enable staff to discuss sensitive topics in an open and direct way. This means that young people are provided with age-appropriate advice from people who recognise their needs.

Young people are preparing for their future. They are encouraged to take appropriate risks and progress their independence skills. Not all young people have up-to-date local authority plans. This has not yet had an impact on young people. However, it is unclear whether all those involved are working to meet young people's needs consistently.

The safety of children

The safety of young people living in the home is a priority. Comprehensive risk assessments provide staff with detailed guidance to manage risk-taking behaviour. This is further supported by a team who know young people well. One social worker said, 'The staff have done well to build positive relationships with the young person and as a result of this, her risks have diminished significantly.'

Young people do not go missing from home. Proactive strategies are in place to prevent these incidents. Rules and boundaries are individualised to the specific needs of each young person. As a result, young people agree and adhere to them.

Impact risk assessments have not always been effective. When previously assessing the suitability of placements, these have not considered all risks. Therefore, some young people's behaviours have had an impact on others.

Staff respond sensitively and in line with policies and procedures to allegations and disclosures of abuse. On one occasion, staff did not seek additional advice from medical professionals when a young person alleged they were under the influence of a substance. That said, staff appropriately monitored the young person to ensure their health and well-being.

Leaders and managers

The manager was registered for this home in July 2020. She has sufficient experience and qualifications to carry out her role. She is driven and places the safety and well-being of children and young people at the centre of her practice.

Leaders and managers have secured a number of positive partnerships with those external to the home. These include health services, the police community support officer and local authorities. Relationships with others are used to strengthen practice in the home and gain support for young people. The registered manager challenges external agencies and advocates for young people where necessary.

Management oversight and monitoring in the home are of good quality. When incidents occur, these are responded to and evaluated well. External monitoring of the home has improved. Independent visitors are now attending the home at more appropriate times to obtain feedback. This supports the manager to further develop practice and identify areas for improvement.

Robust action is taken to respond to any complaints. Detailed documentation outlines all steps taken to investigate complaints, outcomes and responses. However, on one occasion, Ofsted was not notified of a serious complaint. This breaches regulatory requirements.

Staff working in the home report that they have good working relationships with leaders and managers. They have been supported through the current pandemic and feel safe in their workplace. The registered manager ensures that lessons learned are shared with the team.

Staff are supervised regularly and supported to develop. New team members have accessed the organisation's induction programme and have completed appropriate training courses. The development of the home and staff team are areas of focus for leaders and managers.

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 care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p> <p>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) (2)(a))</p>	19/12/2020
<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p> <p>are signed and dated by the author of each entry.</p> <p>(Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p>	19/12/2020
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.</p> <p>(Regulation 40 (4)(e))</p>	19/12/2020

Recommendations

- Staff should have sufficient understanding of relevant health services, including the functions of the designated nurse, for children looked after in their area. They should support children to navigate these services, advocating on their behalf where necessary and appropriate. (Guide to the Children's homes regulations including quality standards', 2015, page 34, paragraph 7.8)
Specifically, accessing appropriate healthcare services to seek advice following unforeseen events.
- Children should be encouraged by staff to see the home's records as 'living documents' and supported to view and contribute to the record in a way that reflects their voice on a regular basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.6)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1227335

Registered provider: Exceptional Care Limited

Registered provider address: Malthouse Business Centre, 48 Southport Road, Ormskirk, Lancashire L39 1QR

Responsible individual: Susan Rolfe

Registered manager: Hayley Bell

Inspectors

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector
Natalie Bennett, Social Care Inspector

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