

1271587

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children who have experienced adverse childhood experiences that have led to associated trauma and complex behaviours.

The manager of the home was registered by Ofsted in June 2020.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 November 2020

Previous inspection date: 12 November 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

Children benefit from having a positive relationship with staff. Children are comfortable in their surroundings and confident when they talk to the staff and visitors.

Staff have increased in confidence since the last inspection and this is reflected in their approach to care. Social workers are complimentary about the service and the changes in approach to care, such as children now benefiting from long-term placements.

The home has adapted to the challenges throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and the national lockdown restrictions. Staff have supported children well through the uncertain period with thoughtful approaches to managing the changes in children's routines and their disappointment and frustration in not being able to see their family. Due to the location of the home, some children have not been able to see their family for a long period of time due to the differing regional restrictions in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff have supported children to increasingly use video calls during these times to stay in touch with people who are important to them.

Children have been able to continue to access the on-site school throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the lack of a permanent teacher has been detrimental to children's learning, with staff having identified that they have not got the skills to teach. A new teacher has now been appointed, although it is acknowledged by senior leaders that there has been a significant delay in appointing an appropriate person to this role.

Despite all the restrictions caused by COVID-19, children have still benefited from increased positive activities, such as walks in the local countryside and doing photography. These varied opportunities have helped to develop children's skills and confidence.

Children's physical and emotional well-being are central to the practice within the home. Both children and staff are supported by the organisation's psychology service. This support enables staff to develop greater consistency and nurture in their approach to care. For the children, this support means that they feel increasingly listened to and are encouraged to share any worries and concerns.

Complaints are responded to swiftly and effectively, with senior leaders reassuring children that they will be listened to and taken seriously.

The safety of children

Children's actions and demeanour show that they feel safe in their home. They are confident around staff, approaching them with worries or concerns, and are also relaxed in communal areas.

Staff are acutely aware of each child's risks and vulnerabilities, and are thoughtful in their approaches to keeping them safe. Staff are confident in the processes that they need to follow should they be worried for a child's welfare. Responses to child protection and safeguarding concerns are swift. Records highlight the prompt action and detailed communication with partner agencies.

Children, on occasion, have gone missing from the home. The manager's evaluation of shortfalls in previous practice has led to a much more coordinated approach that has reduced the likelihood of children going missing in the future.

Staff are developing a much stronger understanding of what children are communicating through their behaviours. Joint working with the psychology team has led to a greater child-centered approach. Children's behaviour support plans highlight children's history and previous trauma, allowing staff to have a deeper understanding of where the behaviour may be rooted. Incident reports are clear in their recording and consideration of the child's needs at the time. However, Ofsted has not been informed of when it has been necessary to call the police to the home. This limits regulatory oversight between inspections.

There has been building work carried out in recent months. As a result, the home is now much homelier, given the original institutional design and layout. Children have engaged in choosing colours for communal areas, and their bedrooms are highly personalised, giving them their own comfortable and welcoming space.

Improvements to the matching of children and the carrying out of impact assessments have been effective. As a result, assessments are now carefully detailed on the impact of the child's needs and of the other children's needs. This is then brought together with the skills of the staff.

Leaders and managers

Staff express confidence in the new manager, saying she is calm and understanding, and that consistency has improved in the months since her appointment. Staff benefit from regular supervisions, which they find challenging and supportive.

The management team monitors the quality of care through evaluation of the records and progress of children effectively. They respond swiftly to any shortfalls raised by the recently changed independent visitor, favouring the new, more thoughtful and robust approach. The management team maintains effective relationships with partner agencies, promoting consistent support for children.

Both children and staff comment on the poor Wi-Fi connection in the home. This results in children not having access to the internet and staff struggling to complete online records.

The registered manager is reflective on the service provided. She has developed strong responses to the shortfalls identified at the last inspection using her previous experience of managing similar settings. All the requirements and recommendations set at that inspection have been met, and the registered manager is keen to ensure that shortfalls do not go unnoticed in the future.

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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that each child has access to appropriate equipment, facilities and resources to support the child's learning. (Regulation 8(2)(b))</p>	18 December 2020

Recommendations

- Children should have access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning, unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why this would be inappropriate. In such cases, the home should consider whether and how it can support the child to access a computer and the internet safely. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.19)
- Examples of incidents that are likely to be considered serious affecting the welfare of a child include: a child being the victim or perpetrator of a serious assault; a serious illness or accident; a serious incident of self-harm, or serious concerns over a child's missing behaviour, particularly where the child is considered to be at grave risk due to age or vulnerability or where they have been missing for a considerable period of time and their whereabouts is unknown. This is not an

exhaustive list and homes must assess each case individually taking into account any patterns of behaviour or unusual behaviour which may indicate an increased risk to the child. Homes should also consider the frequency of incidents and judge whether their cumulative effect makes notification appropriate even if in isolation each event would not warrant this. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.11)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1271587

Registered provider: Greenfields Adolescent Development Limited

Registered provider address: Caretech Community Service Ltd, Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 1AG

Responsible individual: Mark Lazarus

Registered manager: Hywel May, Hayley Williams

Inspector

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector

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