SC448997

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The staff at this children's home provide care for up to two children. The aim of the service is to provide children with stability and consistency, which enables the child to develop trust, confidence and the opportunity to develop and grow.

The registered manager has been registered since April 2018. She is in the final stages of completing a suitable qualification. The registered manager also manages another of the company's homes, which is close by.

Visit dates: 27 to 28 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 12 March 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 make good progress because of the meaningful relationships they develop with staff. At the time of the visit, one child was living at the home. She said that there were staff she could talk to and she felt safe at the home. Staff take every opportunity to hold regular skilful conversations with the child. These are two-way conversations, which are led by both the child and staff, helping the child to feel listened to and accepted.

Decisions about which children should move into the home are carefully considered and take good account of children's needs. Where necessary and appropriate, leaders and managers will arrange for single occupancy of the home.

Children are helped to stay in touch with their families. For example, during the period of restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the staff made sure that one of the children remained in regular contact with her siblings. The staff planned the online meetings well and ensured that they were positive and fun occasions for everyone.

Staff support children's educational plans well. During the COVID-19 pandemic, staff have provided a structure to children's education. Where children do not have a permanent education placement, staff advocate strongly for this to change. There are plans in place for the development of stronger links between the responsible individual and the local authority virtual school for children in care. This action is being taken so that the staff can identify and remove any barriers to children receiving appropriate education.

Children's views are used effectively to inform their care. These views are consistently and meaningfully incorporated into plans. For example, a behaviour management plan reviewed by the inspector provided clear guidance for staff on how they should routinely take account of the child's views on how they are supported. When a child wanted a rabbit as pet, staff took steps to meet this request. She now has the rabbit and is learning how to care for it.

Staff meet children's health needs well. Where children find it difficult to engage with therapeutic services, the staff work with mental health services to ensure that this support is provided. For one child, this approach enabled staff to understand better the impact of her past on her behaviour. A member of staff said that this collaborative approach had helped her to understand the child's behaviour and enabled her to respond more effectively.

The home is generally very pleasant, clean and homely, but the child's bedroom was very cluttered and unkempt. While the room had been tidied during the preceding

weekend, it had quickly deteriorated, and the staff had not helped the child to keep their bedroom in a reasonable state. This was rectified during the visit.

The safety of children

The staff have a good understanding of the impact of abuse on children. They use this knowledge well to consider the holistic action they need to take to promote children's safety. The staff implement good plans that address the impact of the children's experiences and their safety and well-being, and ensure that children who have experienced trauma and loss are properly supported.

Records of safeguarding incidents are maintained in detail, providing a clear overview of what has occurred. A local authority safeguarding officer was positive about how the staff have worked with them to safeguard children. Chronologies of what has occurred in respect of safeguarding concerns are available for most incidents, but not all. This means that if specific information was needed in the future, it may not be readily available.

Risk assessments are appropriate, up to date and detailed. Some assessments have clear strategies for staff to follow, others do not. Behaviour management plans consistently provide very good guidance for staff about how they can recognise what children are trying to communicate through their behaviour and how staff should respond.

The staff follow children's individual plans well, including guidance relating to what staff should do if a child goes missing. The plans are quickly updated when new information arises, and appropriate changes are made if necessary, such as increasing the number of staff on duty. The frequency of missing episodes has reduced due to the actions of staff.

Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in the safety of the premises. The monthly visitor regularly checks whether health and safety requirements have been met. The visitor highlights any shortfalls in the report and managers quickly resolve any concerns.

The staff have responded well to the COVID-19 pandemic. They have put in place relevant safety measures and have adapted these well to the needs of children. For example, the bag staff take with them if a child goes missing from the home now contains hand sanitiser and face coverings for the staff and for the child.

Leaders and managers

Leaders and managers provide strong leadership, which has contributed to a positive staff culture where reflective practice and self-development are promoted. Leaders support the staff to focus on children's needs and to find solutions to the difficulties children experience. One independent reviewing officer said that the staff team is

committed to being part of the wider team around the child to improve their life, while being mindful of the high risks that exist for them.

The level of thought and organisation that leaders and managers put in to managing the home enables it to function well under pressure. Although the registered manager was not present at the assurance visit, information was easily accessible. The responsible individual and staff demonstrated a clear understanding of how the home is operating. For instance, they knew the child well and could explain the rationale for decisions that had been made about their care.

Well-established monitoring systems help the managers to understand the services that are provided. All the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. Appropriate action has been taken to support children's continuity of care during the COVID-19 pandemic. A core group of staff work consistently at the home, supported by regular staff from the provider's other homes. This has resulted in familiar faces being in the home every day, with staff understand the needs of the child who is placement well andthey are consistently available to support her care.

Six-monthly reviews of the quality of the care that is provided do not include children's views. Leaders and managers keep to a set format for the review, rather than decide the areas of focus for each review. The review reports lack evaluation and analysis and this decreases their usefulness in assisting with the continuous improvement of the home.

Leaders and managers have established a positive team culture. Staff challenge each other's practice and they debate issues at regular team meetings and during supervision meetings. Staff are encouraged to consider proactively their training needs and they are provided with good training opportunities, which reflect children's needs. Opportunities to learn from other professionals about children's needs, such as the Child and adolescent mental health team, are used well.

Staffing levels are kept under review and are adapted as necessary. Action has been taken to ensure that rotas clearly show which staff are on duty, as required at the last inspection.

Professionals are positive about the way that the staff work with them. They express confidence in the ability of staff to make decisions, and their collaboration with the team around the child.

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
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care provided for children the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, the quality of care provided for children; any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c))	30/11/2020

Recommendations

- Many children placed in homes may undergo a difficult transition and what should be simple aspects of their care take on a substantial significance in this context. Staff should provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming, supportive, and which provides appropriate boundaries in relation to their behaviour. Homes must also meet children's basic day-to-day needs and physical necessities. Staff should seek to meet the child's basic needs in the way that a good parent would, recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where these needs have not been consistently met – doing so is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care for the child and value them as an individual. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

  In particular, the registered person should ensure that the staff consistently maintain children's bedrooms to an appropriate standard of tidiness and hygiene.

- Regulations 35-39 detail the records that must be kept in children's homes. All children's case records (regulation 36) must be kept up to date and stored securely while they remain in the home. Case records must be kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. Children's case records must be kept for 75 years from the date of birth of the child, or if the child dies before the age of 18, for 15 years from the date of his or her death. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

  In particular, the registered person should use a chronology for all safeguarding concerns. The chronology should be in place from the time the concern becomes known.

- The registered person is responsible for deciding what each review should focus on, based on the specific circumstances of the home at that particular time and any areas of high risk to the children that the home is designed to care for, such as

missing or exploitation. They will also consider what information or data recorded in the home will form part of the evidence base for their analysis and conclusions. There is no expectation that the registered person will review the home against every part of the Quality Standards every six months – registered persons should use their professional judgement to decide which factors to focus on. The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strength and possible weakness in the home's care, which will be captured in the written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next six months of delivery within the home and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC448997

Registered provider: Moonreach Limited

Registered provider address: 4 Dane John Works, Gordon Road, Canterbury, Kent CT1 3PP

Responsible individual: Fern Cowie

Registered manager: Heidi Moat

Inspector

Ruth Coler, Social Care Inspector

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