

1249111

## **Assurance visit**

### **Information about this children's home**

The staff at this home care for children who have specific attachment, behavioral, emotional and social needs because of their childhood experiences.

The home has been without a registered manager since April 2020.

**Visit dates:** 13 to 14 October 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 30 April 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**

Staff at this home are currently providing care for one child. Since the last inspection, other children have also lived in the home. Therefore, this report will refer to the child and the children.

Some staff and the child have recently had to self-isolate for two weeks because of COVID-19 concerns. Contingency planning and risk management in response to this were effective and well managed. The actions of these staff, moving into the home for the period of self-isolation, show their dedication and commitment. Staff provided high-quality child-centred care during this period. Although she has only recently joined the home, the child has developed trusting relationships with the staff. This helped her adjust to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Staff respond with attentiveness and kindness to the child's request for affection and reassurance. The child's social worker commented upon the significant progress she has made within a short timescale.

Staff worked creatively to ensure that the children had access to lots of age-appropriate activities, particularly as COVID-19 restrictions lessened. This has helped to develop the children's confidence and supported their mental well-being, as well as providing opportunities for fun.

The child said that she enjoys living at this home because of her relationships with the staff. However, she also said that she had been upset at not having a chance to say goodbye to a staff member that she got on well with. In this instance leaders have not ensured that the child had the opportunity to experience a positive ending. This suggests a culture in the home where some of the staff have lacked an understanding of the negative emotional impact this can have on children.

The home's physical environment is variable and is poorly maintained in places. Repairs required due to past damage in the home have not all been addressed. This is due in part, but not wholly, to difficulties in the availability of contractors and materials because of the current pandemic.

## **The safety of children**

Staff set boundaries that underpin a warm and supportive culture. Children learn to self-regulate their emotions and behaviours. Staff notice small cues from the children and take time to praise and redirect when required. One child's social worker said self-harming behaviours shown by the child have significantly reduced since she has lived in the home.

The staff know how to identify and report safeguarding concerns. Current plans and assessments for the child identify individual risks and vulnerabilities, and there are clear strategies in place to help staff reduce these. This includes an appropriate high level of staff supervision, which is used effectively and positively to engage with the child.

Pre-admission assessments sampled did not evidence robust consideration of the compatibility between, or evaluate the potential impact of, the similar behaviours presented by the children. Concerns raised by a social worker about the impact risk assessment did not form part of this evaluation. Managers did not explore in depth each individual child's known needs and risks. These shortfalls contributed to the instability experienced by some children in the home, including disrupted placement endings. The previous requirement relating to the protection of children standard, risk assessments, has not been met.

The manager's system for monitoring staff training is ineffective. Records are not kept up to date and show that some staff have not completed the organisation's required training within the expected timescales. No evidence was provided to show that all the staff have up to date first aid training. This means that leaders cannot be confident that at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification.

### **Leaders and managers**

There has been progress since the last inspection visit. However, there is currently no registered manager in place. Consequently, there is no accountable person in day-to-day charge of the running of the home. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in the senior staff team. The operations manager has now been appointed as the manager and is in the process of submitting her application to register.

Staff and the managers promote an inclusive culture in the home. This helps the children to safely explore their individuality and develop a positive self-view.

The registered person and manager confirmed that there are firm plans to improve the physical environment. Recruitment is being undertaken and some strong candidates have been identified as potentially good fits for the organisation. Currently, staffing is adequate to meet the needs of the children.

Staff spoken to said they receive regular supervision and that managers are approachable. However, not all of the supervision records requested were available to view. The deputy manager has recently started to undertake staff supervision. As yet, she has not had training in this area. As a result, leaders cannot be confident that all the staff receive sufficient support and guidance to fulfil their role.

Staff spoke of feeling especially well supported by each other and the managers during the uncertainties of COVID-19. The registered individual and newly appointed manager show enthusiasm and ambition to deliver sustained progress and to continue to develop the service in the best interests of children.

## 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. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i))</p> <p>Repeat requirement</p>	01/01/2021
<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> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(c))</p> <p>This particularly refers to ensuring that the manager has an up-to-date system for monitoring staff training and that staff have completed the organisation's required training within the expected timescale.</p>	01/01/2021
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 31(2)(a))</p>	01/12/2020

### Recommendations

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. Professionally qualified staff employed by the home, e.g. teachers or social workers, should be provided with

relevant professional or clinical supervision by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- 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, ensure that when staff leave the home, their endings are planned, and that children have an opportunity to say goodbye. On the rare occasions when this may not be possible, the managers to ensure a letter or some form of outreach contact is provided, to minimise the impact of abrupt departures on the children.

In particular, ensure all areas of the home are consistently maintained to a high standard.

## **Children's home details**

**Unique reference number:** 1249111

**Registered provider:** Serenity Care Homes Ltd

**Registered provider address:** Conkers Cottage, Brockhills Farm, Sway Road, Tiptoe, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 6FQ

**Responsible individual:** Deborah Lymbery

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## **Inspector**

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector

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