

1223681

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for four children and young people who may have challenging behaviour and/or may be emotionally vulnerable.

The manager is not currently registered with Ofsted, however, has submitted their application.

**Visit dates:** 2 to 3 December 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 8 October 2019

**Previous inspection judgement:** Outstanding

## 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

Young people have trusting and secure relationships with staff. Young people are able to speak to staff openly about their feelings, including how the pandemic has affected them individually. They show an awareness of why there are rules and boundaries in place to assure their safety and protection. Staff are nurturing in their approach. They respond to young people's needs, such as facilitating family contact, helping them maintain a sense of belonging and self-identity.

Young people's meetings are an effective means of ensuring all have a say, for example, sharing a wish list of activities. Important messages are communicated to them by staff, such as the need for Wi-Fi to be switched off at night to help them settle and complying with COVID-19 rules.

All young people are actively engaged in education. A college placement was very quickly secured for a recent admission. Staff dedicate a lot of time and effort to ensuring the young people get up in time to go to school. They also work with them individually, with the help of the in-house therapist, to overcome anxieties associated with school attendance. This has been hampered by pandemic disruption, but the young people have coped well in the circumstances.

Young people are also educated in the home about issues that affect them, such as drug and alcohol misuse, self-harm and sexual health. They complete online safety training and engage positively in individualised key-work sessions. This is helping them reduce the risk to themselves and others. One young person stated that the input from the Addaction team had helped her appreciate the dangers of using drugs.

Young people speak openly and positively about their experiences of being at the home. They show a developing awareness of the need to keep themselves safe, such as the risks associated with going missing. Young people are beginning to see the consequences of their actions, which is helping them become more responsible for their behaviours.

Young people benefit from having structure and routine to the day's activities, including regular exercise in the form of walking and boxing. Young people are also encouraged to eat healthily as part of their daily diet. They enjoy relaxing activities such as movie and pamper nights.

Young people have been involved in worthwhile charity events such as making donations to the NHS during the pandemic. One young person has been nominated for a children and young people's award for her outstanding contribution to charity-based community work. This is an excellent achievement.

## **The safety of children**

Risks to young people are identified and comprehensively reflected in their risk assessments. These are kept up to date, however, not all staff are secure in the knowledge and understanding of all risk factors affecting young people. Strategies in place are not always clear and effective in reducing risk factors associated with young people going missing, and drug and alcohol misuse. However, recent indicators show a decrease in the number of incidents.

Staff respond quickly and appropriately to incidents where young people have put themselves at risk, involving key agencies where necessary. Staff recognise the potential for abuse, such as the risks associated with drug misuse. Staff make every effort to locate and return young people safely when they go missing. They ensure, by contacting social workers, that independent return home interviews take place in a timely way.

Staff put in place firm but fair boundaries, contributing to young people's sense of security and safety. Staff revisit these with the young people at frequent intervals, reminding them, for example, of the revised COVID-19 restrictions as rules change, including the time they should be back in the home after free time.

Staff demonstrate skills in de-escalating very heightened and challenging behaviour, however, incidents have led to an increase in the need to apply restrictive physical intervention. Records show, however, that the methods used have been carried out safely, in keeping with the home's policy.

Managers are strong advocates for young people and ensure that they have access to specialist help, including support to self-regulate and recover from trauma. Support and services to address their emotional, social and health issues are readily accessible and utilised well, including time with the in-house therapist. This improves the life chances and opportunities for all young people.

## **Leaders and managers**

Managers support the staff team well through regular supervision and team meetings. Despite some challenging times in this pandemic year, staff have remained resilient and young person-centred in their approach. Although there have been some recent changes to the leadership and staff team, the core team has remained stable. This provides a secure base and continuity of care for young people.

Managers have good insight into young people's individual needs. They go to substantial lengths to ensure that young people have the opportunity to receive tailored, all-round support to meet their needs and counteract known risks. Timely referrals are made to specialist services such as the drug team. There is close liaison with the police and the local Engage team. Multi-agency meetings are initiated by managers where patterns of missing behaviour start to emerge.

Managers work well with partner agencies, which is embedded in the home’s practice. Partner agencies such as social workers speak highly of the home. One social worker said: ‘Staff have robust boundaries in place, and this supports [x] to feel safe. Staff have implemented incentive-based charts to support [x] to present with positive behaviours and this works really well.’

Records are well organised and comprehensively detailed. The manager takes time to review, appraise and comment on records. This gives her a good oversight of the home and the dedicated work staff undertake with young people. There are, however, deficits in that the manager does not present a clear analysis of patterns and trends affecting young people from their starting points, to inform the quality of care.

No recommendations or requirements were set at the last inspection. However, managers and leaders demonstrate good commitment in continuing to improve the quality of the home’s practice. They provide regular training for staff on core topics such as self-harming and contextualised safeguarding, a new initiative that a staff member has recently researched. Two requirements and one recommendation are raised at this assurance visit.

Since the last inspection, a new manager, formerly the deputy, has been appointed. Given that she knows the home she has adjusted to the position well. She has recently submitted an application to register with Ofsted.

## 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.

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Due date</b>
<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>27 January 2021</p>

<p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that all staff are secure in the knowledge of the risks posed to the young people and are able to implement the strategies in place. Ensure the strategies used are reviewed periodically for the purpose of revising strategies where applicable.</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>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(h))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that a review of the young people’s risk assessments takes place periodically to determine the effectiveness of the strategies used and any lessons learned.</p> <p>This also relates to ensuring that a clear analysis is made of young people’s progress from their starting points that also captures any emerging patterns or trends.</p>	<p>27 January 2021</p>

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure an evaluation of missing-from-home incidents is undertaken to identify any gaps in training, skills or knowledge for staff or to record and retain evidence of what worked well. This evaluation should inform the review of the quality of care. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 46, paragraph 9.31)

## **Children's home details**

**Unique reference number:** 1223681

**Registered provider:** Sandcastle Care Ltd

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

**Responsible individual:** Amber Steib

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## **Inspector**

Michael Charnley, Social Care Inspector

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