

1256135

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is operated by a large national provider. It is registered to care for up to five children aged between 12 and 17 who have complex needs and have experienced trauma and loss.

The registered manager holds a level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare.

Visit dates: 13 to 14 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 24 February 2020

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 identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Staff do not have access to up-to-date risk assessments to help them keep young people safe.
- In some instances, staff lack professional curiosity. As a result, they do not always fully assess and manage known risks.
- Staff have not supported young people to fully understand the risks to which they are exposed.
- A young person has been admitted to the home at a time when there are significant concerns in respect of the existing young people.
- The sufficiency of appropriately trained and skilled staff in the home is of significant concern.
- Staff have been unable to overcome the barrier that prevents one young person from being able to engage with substance misuse services.
- The registered manager has not notified the regulator of some significant incidents in the home.

The care of children

Inspectors found that young people are not safe at this home. As a result, Ofsted made the decision to vary the condition of the home's registration. Ofsted believes that managers and staff are not able to keep five young people safe from the risk of harm effectively. It is believed that reducing numbers to three young people will enable the organisation, the manager and staff to better promote the safety, welfare and care of young people. The change in the conditions of registration came into effect on 16 October 2020 and will remain in place for up to 12 weeks.

The progress for young people living at the home through the period of the COVID-19 pandemic has been variable. Some staff demonstrate good practice and try hard to build positive relationships with young people. However, this relationship building is not consistent across the staff and when young people display high levels of aggression staff quickly become overwhelmed. This results in staff being assaulted and damage being caused to the home.

The environment is not homely and there are places that require repairs. For example, there is damage across a number of rooms in the home and walls are bare. Some young people's bedrooms are dirty. One young person does not have any furniture in their bedroom to enable them to store their clothes. The decking in the rear garden is littered with cigarette butts. Staff informed inspectors that there is nowhere to safely extinguish cigarettes and just accept this situation as the norm. The registered manager has an improvement plan for the home which includes a

new kitchen. However, at the current time, young people are not provided with a home which provides them with a nurturing environment.

Staff worked creatively during the national lockdown period to provide young people with a range of activities in the home. Since it became safe to return to community-based activities, staff have ensured that young people have been able to participate in a range of activities.

Young people are being supported to develop their independence skills. As a result of this, young people learn how to cook meals and take responsibility for their laundry. This is providing young people with essential life skills.

Some young people have been supported to engage in education and there are examples of staff undertaking effective direct work with young people; for example, staff have worked with one young person around healthy relationships.

Staff have been proactive in reducing the risk of COVID-19 infection. This has included implementing additional safeguarding measures to protect and promote the health of young people. For example, staff have worked additional shifts to prevent the use of agency staff. This has reduced the number of visitors to the home and has helped to keep young people safe.

Staff have helped young people to stay in touch with people who are important to them at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, staff have encouraged young people to use video calls to enable them to see and speak to their families. This has enabled meaningful contact to be maintained with families.

The safety of children

There are not enough staff on duty to meet the young people's assessed needs. For example, some young people require high levels of supervision from staff. To secure this required level of supervision means that other young people have less supervision and support. One young person told inspectors that she is unhappy and does not receive enough support from staff and will cry herself to sleep at night.

Staff do not have access to up-to-date risk assessments. Assessments vary in quality and the level of information recorded. For example, an absent without permission plan for a young person is rated as low. However, in the same young person's risk plan, he has a risk rating for being absent set at high. Key information was missing from one young person's risk assessment in regard to the risk posed by a known sex offender. These omissions mean that staff do not have access to up-to-date information to help them to keep young people safe.

On one occasion, a young person who has a known history of alcohol use returned to the home with a bottle in a carrier bag. Staff believed this to be alcohol but allowed the young person to settle to bed knowing that he might have alcohol in his bedroom. Following this, all five young people left the home in the early hours of the morning and returned intoxicated. This young person has a history of expressing

suicidal thoughts when intoxicated. The lack of effective action from staff placed this young person and consequently the other young people living in the home at significant risk of harm.

One young person receives regular visits from an alcohol and substance misuse worker. Despite these visits, staff lack professional curiosity in questioning how a young person is able to continue to get hold of cannabis and how they fund this. For example, when asked how a young person accesses cannabis, a member of staff replied, 'I'm not sure, he must get it from somewhere.' This is a further example of the poor safeguarding culture in the home. Staff seem resigned to the fact that young people in the home use cannabis.

Staff use bedroom door alarms to monitor young people's movements in the home at night-time. When a member of staff was asked about how the decision is reached on when these are used, they replied, 'They have always been on for as long as I have worked here.' This means that there is no assessment as to whether the use of door alarms remains proportionate and appropriate.

Young people receive a good response from managers when they raise a complaint. However, on two occasions, the registered manager has failed to notify Ofsted of a complaint that has been made against members of staff. This lack of transparency prevents the regulator from having oversight of the service.

Leaders and managers

Overall, COVID-19 has not had a significant impact on the quality of care provided to young people. Staff have taken appropriate action to support young people during this period. For example, staff have encouraged young people to use video calls to speak to their families.

Staff supervision is more regular for some staff than other staff and the quality of these supervisions is variable. New staff do not receive supervision twice per month as detailed in the home's statement of purpose. This means that new staff are not receiving supervision where they can be supported, seek constructive feedback, and to reflect on and improve their practice.

The matching of new young people to the home is weak. There is not enough consideration given to the needs of a new young person against the needs of young people already living at the home. Consequently, young people's care is compromised.

Managers have not ensured that records in the home are accurate. Information is recorded in several places and is duplicated unnecessarily. This makes it hard for the reader to know which is the most up-to-date record. This can lead to mistakes.

Managers do not review the effectiveness of behaviour management systems. This lack of scrutiny means that staff regularly implement financial sanctions to manage young people's behaviour. Sanctions are not restorative in nature and there is little

evidence that the sanctions used effect positive change. One young person received a financial sanction to cover the cost of fuel when staff used the home's car to search for her when she was missing from home. This is unreasonable and does not ensure that the young person receives the message that staff care about her safety.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff protect and promote each child's welfare and ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child.</p> <p>(Regulation 6 (1)(a)(2)(ii)(c)(i))</p>	30/11/2020
<p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from—</p> <p>relationships based on mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour and positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>(Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p>	30/11/2020
<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>	30/11/2020

<p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare and that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm;</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(vi)(b)(d))</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</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</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>*(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(f))</p>	<p>15/11/2020</p>
<p>The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure 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</p>	<p>30/11/2020</p>

<p>accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to ensure the effective induction of each child into the home.</p> <p>(Regulation 14(1)(a)(2)(b)(i)(ii))</p>	
<p>No measure of control or discipline which is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (2) may be used in relation to any child.</p> <p>(Regulation 19(1))</p>	30/11/2020
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home;</p> <p>is necessary and proportionate;</p> <p>is kept under review and, if necessary, revised;</p> <p>allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe.</p> <p>(Regulation 21(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))</p> <p>In particular, the appropriateness of using bedroom door alarms needs to be fully considered and kept under review.</p>	30/11/2020
<p>The registered person must ensure—</p> <p>that all employees undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience.</p> <p>(Regulation 33(4)(a)(b))</p>	30/11/2020
<p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out—</p> <p>how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home;</p> <p>the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home.</p>	30/11/2020

<p>The registered person must ensure—</p> <p>that within 24 hours of the measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure.</p> <p>(Regulation 35(1)(a)(b)(3)(a)(vii))</p>	
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; or</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.</p> <p>(Regulation 40(4)(b)(c)(e))</p>	<p>30/11/2020</p>

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- Some records may be kept electronically (regulation 38) provided that this information can be easily accessed by anyone with a legitimate need to view it and, if required, be reproduced in a legible form. Electronic records should be held at the individual home in accordance with data protection principles. IT systems should ensure the safe storage of these records and business continuity planning should be in place to prevent loss or damage to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 14.2)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1256135

Registered provider: Homes 2 Inspire Limited

Registered provider address: Suite 3H, Valiant Office Suites, Valley Drive, Swift Valley Industrial Estate, Rugby CV21 1TQ

Responsible individual: Karen Jackson

Registered manager: Gregory Harrison

Inspectors

Annemarie Parker, Social Care Inspector
Kev Brammer, Social Care Inspector

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