

SC063883

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This privately run home provides care for up to three children aged between eight and 18 years. It specialises in providing long-term, therapeutic residential care for children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since December 2018.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 5 November 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 benefit from positive relationships with staff. It is evident from the interactions staff have that they care about the children and know them well. Children feel able to ask for support, and staff are skilled at adapting their approaches to meet children's individual needs.

Children make significant progress with their education. Throughout the COVID-19 restrictions, the staff have sourced education materials and have advocated on the children's behalf. Staff have close working relationships with teachers, which helps children to maintain their school attendance. However, when it has not been possible for children to attend school, they have continued to be supported from home.

Staff support children to spend time with their family. Throughout the pandemic, technology has been used to promote positive relationships and where appropriate, staff have transported children a considerable distance to see their family. This has helped children to maintain relationships with those who are important to them.

The staff team has provided children with a range of home-based activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, children engaged in commemorating important historical events, including Victory in Europe Day and Remembrance Sunday. These activities support the children to understand their history and have helped to keep them occupied during lockdown.

Staff engage children in discussions that support their emotional well-being. As a result, children are more open to talk about how they are feeling.

The safety of children

Staff respond quickly and use positive strategies to support the children in times of crisis. Staff have open and honest conversations with the children, and when required, staff challenge negative behaviours. Staff use their skills to de-escalate and support children to manage their behaviours. This helps to give the children a sense of safety and well-being.

The grounds for searching a child's bedroom are not always clear. This has resulted in the checking of bedrooms becoming routine practice as opposed to where there are reasonable grounds for believing that there is a risk to the child's safety. This is not best practice and has the potential to impact on the child's privacy.

Risk assessments are not updated or reviewed regularly. The information within them contradicts behaviour management plans and does not provide staff with full details of how to reduce risk or respond to negative behaviours.

Not all staff know how to respond to allegations in line with agreed policies and procedures. This has led to a delay in staff reporting allegations to the appropriate people within the required timescale. The manager has taken steps to address this

with one staff member. However, the lack of understanding within the team does not provide effective protection to children.

Sanctions are rarely implemented for the children. However, one sanction in place does not have a clear end date and has not been reviewed by the manager. This hinders the manager's ability to ensure that the measure used was effective and appropriate.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager is very child focused. She has advocated for better outcomes for the children, including changing schools and more time with family. This has helped to improve the children's experiences.

The training and development of staff are good. Staff confirm that the training they have attended is useful and informative and supports them to meet the specific needs of the children.

The registered manager undertakes regular monitoring of the service. However, this monitoring lacks evaluation. The manager does not evidence that she evaluates incidents thoroughly and within timescales. This lack of analysis hinders the manager's ability to identify any shortfalls in practice.

Staff supervisions are up to date. However, the records lack detail and do not evidence if further debriefs have taken place with staff following incidents. This does not provide staff with additional opportunities to reflect on practice and identify areas for improvement.

The registered manager is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and has plans in place to improve the systems for oversight and recording in the home.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p>	1 January 2021

<p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(vi)(vii))</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;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to 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>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(e)(f)(h))</p> <p>In particular, the manager should have full oversight of the home to fully evaluate and record findings following incidents. Risk assessments should provide clear guidance to staff and be reviewed and amended following all significant incidents.</p>	<p>10 February 2021</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that a child's bedroom is not generally entered without their permission, although it may be necessary to establish routines to allow for rooms to be cleaned regularly. Usually, rooms should only be searched if the child has been informed or asked for their permission. Immediate searching may be necessary where there are reasonable grounds for believing that there is a risk to the child's or another person's safety or well-being. In particular, room searches should only take place if there is immediate risk. The rationale for any decision to do these routinely should be clearly recorded and reviewed frequently. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 16 and 17, paragraph 3.20)
- The registered person should ensure that Regulation 19(2) details sanctions that are prohibited in behaviour management. The registered person should ensure that any sanctions used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. In some cases, it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to staff and anyone hurt by their behaviour. In particular, sanctions should have clear end dates and be reviewed if they are continued. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46 and 47, paragraph 9.38)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC063883

Registered provider: Keys Care Limited

Registered provider address: C/o Pinsent Masons LLP, The Soloist Building, 1 Lanyon Place, Belfast, Northern Ireland BT1 3LP

Responsible individual: Joanne Carter

Registered manager: Alexia Bedford

Inspector

Debra Boldy, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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