

1256973

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to accommodate up to six children. The statement of purpose states that it admits children who need therapeutic care and support. The home is the only home owned and operated by this small, private organisation.

The registered manager post has been vacant since May 2019.

**Visit dates:** 8 to 9 December 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 15 October 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**

The COVID-19 pandemic has proved challenging for the staff, who have worked very hard to meet the needs of the young people in exceptional circumstances. Leaders understand that they have continual work to do to support the staff team and, for some of the staff, raise their morale. Overall, the staff have managed the restrictions relating to COVID-19 well.

Inspectors saw warm interactions between the staff and the young people. The young people spoke fondly about some of the staff, and mostly felt supported during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Some of the young people found the changes and restrictions more difficult than others.

All the young people have maintained education through the COVID-19 pandemic and the two lockdowns. The vast majority of young people access the on-site school, where lessons were delivered virtually at the start of the pandemic and then moved on to face-to-face teaching.

Changes to the arrangements for spending time with family and those significant to the young people during the COVID-19 restrictions have proven challenging for some of the young people to understand. The staff have worked hard to facilitate virtual and, where possible, face-to-face contact, albeit at a distance at times.

The young people express their wishes and feelings very clearly and said that they do not hesitate to do so with staff members. Some young people are not confident that their wishes are always acted on. Some young people's plans did not contain sufficient consideration or action following the young people talking about what they wanted to happen at home or in their lives. The responsible individual confirmed that this is an area of continued development and improvement.

The young people like their rooms and felt that they could have the space how they wanted it. Not all areas of the home environment are presented to the same standard. In particular, the garden area was not well presented and some areas were not clean and tidy. These shortfalls detract from an otherwise comfortable home.

Two new young people have arrived during the COVID-19 period. Their transitions have been shorter than the staff have liked; however, the young people's best interests have been duly considered and transition arrangements agreed with their local authorities. Access to a range of health professionals has, in some instances, been a challenge. For example, leaders have accessed private dentists to ensure that young people's dental health is maintained.

## **The safety of children**

There is a well-imbedded safeguarding culture in the home. The staff take timely and appropriate action to safeguard the young people. The staff have a good understanding of their role in the event of any safeguarding incident. Leaders are continually updating their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding practices.

Staff receive external training and support from experts in the safeguarding field to ensure that they understand the processes for reporting, referring and recording concerns and allegations.

Leaders have taken action to improve fire safety and reduce the amount of fire alarms. These changes have caused some confusion for some staff members, and not all staff know how to raise an alarm. Inspectors were advised that this would be addressed as a priority.

Incidents of restraint are recorded each time they occur, and this is consistent with the regulations. The staff and young people receive a debrief following all physical interventions; however, records are kept separately. The newly introduced reporting system does not provide for easily accessible auditing processes. This hinders the manager's ability to review records for patterns or trends, and to ensure that practice is fair and appropriate.

### **Leaders and managers**

The registered manager's position remains vacant. The responsible individual is in day-to-day charge of the home. She is supported by senior staff and a staff team that has increased in number this year. She is working closely with a senior member of staff to develop their skills and to ensure that they have the required level of management knowledge and experience to manage the home. Young people have recently experienced changes in the senior leadership of the on-site school.

Placement support plans, behaviour support plans and therapy plans are completed by the staff. Although the documents record that they have been regularly updated, in examples seen by inspectors they did not reflect the current circumstances of the young people.

Social workers that inspectors spoke to confirmed that they felt that the young people were generally safe in the home. They spoke positively about some staff members and how they had engaged young people and built relationships, even where that was challenging. One social worker was particularly pleased that a young person was supported to keep their pets. However, some social workers raised concerns about poor communication. Leaders confirmed that work is taking place to improve communication between the staff and families and social workers.

Communication between the on-site school and the children's home staff team has very recently seen a positive change. Daily face-to-face handovers between the school staff and care staff now take place, in addition to weekly meetings where both education and care staff can reflect together. A school leader and care staff all expressed how communication has improved in the last few months.

The requirements set at the previous inspection have been addressed. In particular, the leaders have improved the systems for setting expectations and scrutinising the administration of medication. There is now a regular audit system in place that identifies any gaps or errors when they occasionally occur, so that a learning culture

is promoted. Recruitment processes and records are well organised and meet regulatory requirements.

The number of external complaints has decreased significantly since May this year. Leaders respond straight away to any concerns raised by neighbours with mostly a positive outcome. Internal investigations and staff disciplinary actions are managed well.

The home's statement of purpose has been updated, although it has not been submitted to 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.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revision and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(b))</p>	29 January 2021
<p>The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if there is no registered manager in respect of the home. (Regulation 27 (1)(a))</p>	29 January 2021
<p>The registered person must ensure that the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)(a)(b))</p> <p>With particular reference to ensuring that all staff members are aware of how to activate the fire alarms.</p>	31 December 2020
<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p>	29 January 2021

are signed and dated by the author of each entry.  
(Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))

With particular reference to placement support plans and  
behavioural management plans.

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's homes are nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of children, that they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments, particularly in relation to the garden space and ensuring that the environment is consistently clean and tidy. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair, and the principles as set out in 9.35 are respected. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 1256973

**Registered provider:** Cameron And Cooper Limited

**Registered provider address:** Accord Accountants, 191-193 High Street,  
Hampton Hill, Hampton TW12 1NL

**Responsible individual:** Camilla McInnes

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspectors

Liz Driver, Social Care Inspector  
Alexander Dignan, Social Care HMI

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