

SC459857

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a children's charity. The provider states in the statement of purpose that it provides care and accommodation for up to six children who have emotional, social and/or behavioural difficulties. Staff use concepts and theoretical models drawn from social pedagogy and attachment theory in their work.

This children's home has two emergency beds, one of which is used to provide up to 140 nights per year of 'Staying close' accommodation. This is in conjunction with the Department for Education's 'Staying close' initiative. The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2020.

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

**Previous inspection date:** 21 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**

Throughout the pandemic, children have benefited from living in a therapeutically informed home, where they have the opportunity to thrive. Staff have good relationships with children and there is a strong understanding of children's complex needs. An independent reviewing officer praised 'the commitment to help children flourish'.

Children have enjoyed a range of fun activities with staff. Popular pastimes have included dancing, cooking competitions, karaoke and movie nights. Children have also had the opportunity to go on a holiday.

Children's talents and strengths are nurtured. Children are learning to understand themselves and their impact on others. Staff work hard to empower children, helping them grow emotionally and building on their resilience.

Leaders and managers are ambitious for children. All children are enrolled in school or college. Bespoke support is available for children from the organisation's educational lead. It is commendable that children use their initiative by finding their own college courses and independently studying for exams.

Staff support children to take pride in who they are, which helps them develop a positive identity. Children are able to observe their religious traditions. Children also appreciate the efforts staff make in the celebration of their birthdays.

Children learn to appreciate other cultures, global issues and the impact of discrimination. An example of the latter is making banners for a Black Lives Matter demonstration. Children also celebrated Eid and Black History Month, and on the day of the visit staff were decorating the house for Christmas.

### **The safety of children**

Children living at the home currently feel safe. There have been occasions when they have felt unsafe due to bullying from other children in the home. Staff have not always supervised children with effective vigilance. Safeguarding is not regularly discussed in individual supervision meetings.

However, leaders and managers do learn from incidents and there is purposeful reflection to ensure that children are protected. A safeguarding professional stated that they have been 'impressed by their safeguarding practice'. As a result of some placements being terminated, the referral system has been strengthened. There is careful matching of children being admitted to the home through meticulous impact risk assessments.

There is an effective system in place to minimise the risks posed to children by COVID-19. Throughout the home, there are hand sanitisers and children are routinely provided with masks when they leave the home. Where necessary, vulnerable staff are furloughed and no children have tested positive for COVID-19.

A risk management system is in place, which includes the continual reviewing of the risks posed to children. Behaviour management plans clearly outline strategies to help staff positively support children. Staff are also supported and guided by the organisation's in-house therapeutic team.

Staff focus on building on children's strengths, using a trauma-informed and attachment-based model. Sanctions help children with taking responsibility for their actions. Occasionally, physical interventions are undertaken by staff to prevent injury to others.

The home generally has a good system in place to notify Ofsted of significant events. There was, however, one occasion when a notification was not sent in. This related to a child being arrested and spending a night in police custody. Staff appropriately challenge the police when they feel children have been the victim of racial profiling.

## **Leaders and managers**

During the ongoing pandemic, the registered manager and the core staff team have worked closely to provide continuity of care for children. They have prioritised children's needs and demonstrated resilience, flexibility and creativity. The registered manager has shown dynamic leadership, assisting with covering shifts when there have been staff shortages.

Children benefit from a highly committed, diverse staff team, whose expertise includes social work and psychology. The information technology system is ineffective, which has an impact on the staff's ability to keep records.

Staff enjoy making a difference in children's lives and they feel well supported in their role. They benefit from a range of training, practice-enhancing team meetings and regular supervision. Staff feel listened to and valued.

The organisation has a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice. Staff challenge sexist, racist, homophobic and transphobic language and behaviour. Issues regarding staff practice are investigated and dealt with appropriately.

The home has continued to be monitored every month by an independent visitor, and some of these visits have been virtual. A recent independent visitor report did not comment on whether children were safe. The report also failed to include an evaluative sentence to say that children's welfare is promoted.

The requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. The registered manager has a vision for the future, which is clearly detailed in the home's development plan. During the visit, a child told the inspector what they

would like changed. They would like a pet, a home car, for staff to spend more time with them, to promptly see their files and to live in a more homely atmosphere.

## 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
The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (4))	1 February 2020
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(b))	1 February 2020
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— 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. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that staff monitor individual children effectively.	1 February 2020

### Recommendations

- The registered person should make sure that supervision of staff practice ensures that individual adults in the home are engaged in the safeguarding culture of the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.14)
- The registered person should ensure that children see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)

- The registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

In particular, ensure that staff have effective information technology to maintain the home's records.

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** SC459857

**Registered provider:** St Christopher's Fellowship

**Registered provider address:** 1 Putney High Street, London, Wandsworth SW15 1SZ

**Responsible individual:** Philip Townsend

**Registered manager:** Matthew King

## Inspectors

Sharon Payne, Social Care Inspector  
Gulcin Ardic, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2020