

1252937

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to four children who may have behavioural and/or learning difficulties and who may be at risk of self-harm, substance misuse and exploitation.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 29 November 2019.

In this home, staff are referred to as adults. Therefore, the term 'adults' will be used for staff throughout this report.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 3 March 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 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 adults know the children well, which helps the managers to make informed decisions about which children come to live at the home. The adults listen to children, act on their views and support their aspirations effectively. One child said that the adults have helped her to change a lot of things. She is now doing well at school and making better friendship choices, and the adults are helping her to attain her wish to move to foster care.

The children's physical, social and emotional needs are met well. The adults are nurturing, which has helped to promote children's mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. They help children to understand the world around them. For example, they watch the news together so that they can discuss what is occurring. This supports the adults to know what worries the children have and enables them to provide reassurance.

The adults assist the children to take up therapeutic support. Two children have commenced therapy sessions, when previously they had refused. One child said that with adults' support, she now realises that it would be helpful for her to look at how her past affects her now. She is confident that the adults would be there to help her if she was to find thinking about the past challenging.

The adults promote the children's education successfully. Where one child has not been in education, the managers have continued to challenge the local authority about this. The adults have also provided daily education for this child and they support her to have healthy daily routines. They support her to maintain friendships and mix with other children so that she will be ready to attend a school.

The adults actively help children to see their families and friends. The adults have supported the children to use online communications during the pandemic and enabled face-to-face meetings whenever possible. The adults plan well for important family occasions. For example, they are actively discussing how to make children's time with their family over the Christmas period as positive as possible. When a parent raised a concern about the arrangements in place for her to see her child, this was dealt with effectively by the registered manager.

The safety of children

Children, parents and professionals say that children are safe living at the home. Professionals say that managers make the right decisions if there is a safeguarding concern and take appropriate action to prevent it from reoccurring.

Good behaviour is promoted well, and poor behaviour is challenged effectively. Consequently, there are minimal numbers of incidents and physical restraint is seldom used. The instances of children going missing from the home have also decreased.

Physical restraint records generally contain good detail of incidents that occur and the documents are reviewed appropriately. However, one record does not contain details about any further action that may have been necessary to help the child to learn from the incident. This means that the recording does not always reflect the thorough responses that managers take to prevent or reduce the use of restraints.

One child is very proud that she has not gone missing from the home for 16 months; previously she had frequently done so. A social worker said that the adults are proactive when children go missing from the home. They make all possible efforts to ensure that children who do go missing, return safely.

The adults demonstrate that they have a good awareness of the principles of therapeutic care. They use this knowledge well to inform how they respond to children's behaviour. The managers continue to increase the adults' understanding of the impact of abuse and neglect to continuously improve this area of practice. For example, they are introducing therapeutic care training for all adults.

Regular and effective discussions between children and adults have a positive and lasting effect on children's welfare and behaviour. An independent reviewing officer has noted how a child is now much more able to cope with hearing difficult messages. This helps her to participate more in meetings about her care. The child reported that she can see the difference in herself. She is proud of this and is positive about her achievements.

Leaders and managers

Leaders and managers have a very inclusive approach, which is valued by the children, their families, the adults who work at the home and professionals. The managers maintain a clear view of what they want to achieve for children. They champion children's rights and involve children in decisions about their lives and how the home is run.

The adults working at the home say that managers support them well. They work effectively as a team. Adults' discussions with children have supported children well to manage a two-week period of isolation after some children tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. Children said that they were bored during this time but were kept occupied, and they liked the wall mural they created to send messages of support to children who were also isolating.

The adults have positive relationships with professionals, who say that the adults put children at the centre of their practice and contribute to the child's wider professional network confidently and well.

Managers continue to focus on training during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has enabled several adults to complete a relevant qualification. The registered manager has conducted observations of staff practice for the coursework adults have completed. The manager confirmed that this is improving her understanding of adults' skills, which is helping her to identify staff's strengths and training needs.

Managers have much clearer systems in place to monitor practice, which they are using effectively to support the home's development. For example, supervision meetings with the adults who work at the home now include a review of children's files and records. The requirement made at the last inspection is therefore met.

Leaders and managers continuously improve the services provided at this home, and they promote reflection and learning. For instance, they recently created a new internal therapeutic service for all children who live in any of their homes and disseminated the learning from a recent concerning safeguarding incident that occurred at another home within the organisation.

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

Recommendations

- 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 that they record all the actions they intend to take, or have taken, in respect of a restraint. ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1252937

Registered provider: Compass Children's Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Mountfields House, Epinal Way, Off Squirrel Way, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3GE

Responsible individual: Rachel Ashton

Registered manager: Angela Sayers

Inspector

Ruth Coler, Social Care Inspector

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