

1027158

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home, which is managed by a private organisation, provides long-term placements for six children who have social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and may be considered vulnerable. The manager was registered with Ofsted in February 2018.

Visit dates: 14 to 15 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 19 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

Six children live at this home. No children have moved in or out of the home since 1 April 2020.

The manager's and staff's responses to the COVID-19 pandemic are effective. The staff are creative in their use of time and space to ensure that children are suitably occupied. Some of the children continued with formal education during the COVID-19 national lockdown period in 2020. On occasion, the children had to self-isolate. This interrupted their education. However, the staff provided a variety of activities to promote the children's educational engagement. The staff managed self-isolation periods safely, and no children tested positive for COVID-19. A robust protocol is in place to ensure that the staff and the children take appropriate measures to reduce the likelihood of transmission of the infection.

Positive relationships are a strength of the home. The children spoke about being loved and feeling part of a family. The staff and children display verbal and physical affection towards one another and there is great warmth in these interactions.

Children benefit from participating in a variety of activities such as karate and motocross, and volunteering at a farm. Some of the children have enjoyed holidays in Scotland and Skegness. The staff encourage the children's participation in activities that are personalised to their specific preferences. This helps children to develop their confidence and build on their networks outside the home.

External professionals were complimentary about the care that the staff provide for the children. External professionals recognise the progress that the children make because they live at the home. The children recognise their own progress and spoke about these improvements with pride.

The safety of children

Following a child's significant self-harm incident, the manager worked collaboratively with external professionals to ensure that the child's return to the home from hospital was safe. Effective responsive measures were implemented to ensure the child's safety. These measures consisted of increased staffing, the installation of anti-ligature fixtures and additional training for the staff. The measures led to the child's behaviours stabilising, and reduced the risk of harm.

The staff use key-working sessions to address the children's risk-taking behaviours. These sessions increase the children's awareness of dangers such as online gaming, alcohol misuse and substance misuse, and help to deter further occurrences.

Overall, the risk assessments outline the children's risks and the strategies for reducing these. However, not all the children's risks are recorded. This gap in recording creates the opportunity for error. The impact of this shortfall is reduced because the staff know how to manage the children's risk-taking behaviours.

Restraint is used proportionately and only after de-escalation strategies have been exhausted. Sanctions are used creatively to educate the children and increase their understanding of negative behaviours they have displayed.

Leaders and managers

The manager is well respected by the staff team. The staff said that she is approachable, supportive and has the children’s welfare at the heart of her practice.

Internal monitoring is good. The reports evaluate and review the quality of care in a detailed manner. The reports identify strengths and areas for improvement.

The independent visitor’s reports detail the experiences and progress of the children. The reports are comprehensive, concise and evaluative. These evaluations help drive improvements at the home. On one occasion, the independent visitor’s report was not submitted to Ofsted. This prevented Ofsted from having oversight of the home.

Staff team meetings take place regularly. These meetings provide an opportunity for the manager to discuss operational aspects of the home and to address staff practice concerns as they arise. The blend of mentoring and guidance provided by the manager improves the quality of care that the staff provide for the children.

The manager ensures that the staff receive regular supervision. The staff said that their supervision enables them to successfully develop in their roles. The staff’s training is up to date and responsive to the children’s needs.

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 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</p>	<p>31 December 2020</p>

<p>necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that risk assessments accurately reflect children’s risks and reduction strategies.</p>	
<p>The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person’s report to—</p> <p>HMCI. (Regulation 44 (7)(a))</p>	<p>31 December 2020</p>

Children’s home details

Unique reference number: 1027158

Registered provider: Unique Care Homes Support Limited

Registered provider address: 2nd Floor Maybrook House, Queensway, Halesowen, Worcestershire B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Janet Porter

Registered manager: Sarah Mansi

Inspector

Lianne Bradford, Social Care Inspector

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