

1256795

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is privately run. The home is registered for four children or young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties and mild to moderate learning disabilities. The home offers short, medium, or long-term residential placements for children and young people of either gender.

The registered manager has been in post since February 2019. However, they are currently absent from the home. Interim management arrangements are in place.

The inspectors were aware during this visit that a serious incident which had occurred at the setting since the previous inspection was under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incidents were considered (where appropriate) alongside other evidence available at the time of the visit to inform the inspectors' judgements.

Visit dates: 15 to 16 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 identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Safeguarding arrangements are ineffective and do not protect children from harm.
- Poor matching of children compromised the safety of all children living in the home.
- Staff do not follow risk assessments. As a result, children are at risk of significant harm.
- Managers have failed to effectively respond to safeguarding concerns.
- The monitoring systems in place have failed to safeguard children.

The care of children

There are serious and widespread concerns within several areas of practice relating to the care and support that children receive. As a result, children are at risk of harm.

There are significant failures in how one child was admitted to the home. The manager failed to fully evaluate the risks and poor planning quickly led to an escalation in negative behaviours for children living in the home. As such, the safety and well-being of children have been compromised.

Children have been supported by staff to engage in education and overcome the barriers to learning that they face. Staff have also worked in collaboration with education professionals to support children to make progress. This has helped to ensure that children have access to the support they need.

Staff ensure that family time has continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Where appropriate, staff have supported children to meet with their family face to face, in line with the local restrictions. This has helped to ensure that children maintain their sense of identity and connections with those who are important to them.

The staff have minimised the impact of the lockdown restrictions for children. Although regular activities or support groups have not been available, children have been kept busy. This includes children having access to more in-house activities, such as board games, basketball, and gaming.

The safety of children

Staff do not always take the necessary steps to keep children safe. This is because the manager's oversight of safeguarding practice is poor.

Risk assessments are completed and contain sufficient details or actions for staff to follow. However, staff have failed to adhere to these safety strategies. For example, staff supervision of the children in the home has been poor and this has led to children exhibiting risky behaviours. Furthermore, on at least one occasion staff did not seek medical support for children when needed. This does not demonstrate robust safeguarding practice and places children at risk of harm.

The manager and staff team have failed to demonstrate that they consistently follow child protection procedures to address safeguarding concerns. For example, concerns about the safety of children have not been reported in line with the home's procedures. This lack of action prevents local safeguarding professionals from undertaking their roles to better protect children.

Ofsted is not informed immediately of significant events in relation to the welfare and protection of the children in the home. When Ofsted has been notified by the manager, information shared does not provide an accurate account of the incident that has occurred. This prevents Ofsted from having the necessary oversight to ensure that children are protected.

Leaders and managers

The manager has failed to lead and manage the home in a way which is consistent with the home's statement of purpose. Since the last full inspection, it is reported that there has been a decline in how the home is run.

The manager and staff have failed to understand their individual responsibilities and roles in relation to protecting children, including what action to take whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. This has put children at risk of significant harm.

Managerial monitoring and the external monitoring by the independent person have been ineffective. This means that leaders and managers have not taken effective action when shortfalls have been identified. As a result, improvements have not occurred in a timely manner.

Staff do not routinely receive practice supervision. This lack of support does not provide staff members with the knowledge and skills they need to care for children.

Records completed by staff, such as key work sessions, risk assessments and children's plans, vary in quality. Records do not always reflect the work completed

with a child. This does not enable the manager to effectively monitor the quality of care provided to the children.

The manager and staff discuss and reflect with the child psychologist the care needs of the children, what works, and what needs to change. This consultation process helps the manager to plan the children's day-to-day care.

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 necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <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;</p> <p>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.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(v)(vi) and (vii))</p> <p>This particularly refers to ensuring that: staff follow risk assessments; staff take effective action when there is serious</p>	<p>24 January 2021</p>

<p>concern about a child's welfare; and staff are aware of and follow the home's children protection procedure.</p> <p>The manager must have a robust admissions system in place, that carefully considers the individual needs of each child. This important information needs to be gathered to ensure that any identified risks are managed effectively.</p> <p>*This requirement is subject to a compliance notice</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>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a) and (h))</p> <p>This particularly refers to the manager ensuring that all staff have sufficient skills and knowledge to meet the specific needs of children. Monitoring systems are used effectively and that shortfalls are identified and acted upon.</p> <p>Also, managers must ensure that the children's emotional well-being is considered when making a decision that affects their day-to-day care.</p> <p>*This requirement is subject to a compliance notice.</p>	<p>24 January 2021</p>
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p>	<p>24 January 2021</p>

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home’s statement of purpose.</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>ensure the effective induction of each child into the home;</p> <p>manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and</p> <p>plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child’s placing authority.</p> <p>(Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(i)(ii) and (iii))</p> <p>This particularly refers to the manager ensuring that effective evaluation has occurred and only those children that can be suitably matched to those already living at the home are admitted.</p>	
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.</p> <p>(Regulation 40 (4)(e))</p> <p>This particularly refers to ensuring that Ofsted is notified after each significant event, and that the information shared accurately describes the incident and the subsequent action taken to reduce the risk.</p>	<p>24 January 2021</p>

Children’s home details

Unique reference number: 1256795

Registered provider: Horizon Care and Education Group Limited

Registered provider address: Horizon Care and Education Group Limited,
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Responsible individual: Sean Milnes

Registered manager: Mark Stewart

Inspectors

Aaron Mcloughlin, Social Care Inspector

Cath Sikakana, Social Care Inspector

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