

2534684

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to accommodate and to provide care for up to five children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The registered manager's post has been vacant since July 2020. The current manager has submitted an application to Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting to carry out a monitoring visit on 7 July 2020. The report is published on our website

Inspection dates: 20 to 21 May 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 7 July 2020.

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/07/2020	Monitoring	No judgement
26/11/2019	Interim	No judgement

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff provide a level of support and care to children that stem from highly effective relationships built on trust. All children have made good progress since arriving at the home. One child said the home was 'busy but calm'. This child also described the staff team as 'supportive, helpful and caring'.

Children make positive progress from some challenging start points. One child, who would not leave his room or shower previously, now joins in with activities and has good personal hygiene. He has formed positive relationships with staff members and other children in the home. This child has been successfully supported to progress emotionally and behaviourally.

Children are in good physical health. Meals are nutritious and well planned. Children are encouraged to attend extra-curricular activities which promote healthy living. Some examples of this are martial arts and riding bicycles.

Children and staff share good-quality relationships that are filled with warmth. Staff use a lot of humour and playfulness in their interactions with children. Children are able to identify staff that they trust and can approach. Positive relationships are key-building blocks for the progress children make.

The leadership team model a good therapeutic model of care to their staff team. This is embedded in home's culture, from which all children have benefited. It is also evident in the progress that the children have made emotionally and behaviourally. Staff advocate strongly for children with external partners to ensure the best outcomes. Staff are reflective and driven to improve the standards of care and support for children. This includes celebrating the individual needs of each child.

The home is well maintained and welcoming. Situated in a rural location, the children have large areas of space to play and to express themselves. Children have started returning to community activities as COVID-19 restrictions have eased. One child has started karate and scouts, while another plays golf. Weekly planners for each child clearly show varied and individual activities for each child. The children are happy to be returning to activities and look forward to these.

Children have a monthly book allowance. As a result of this, each child is an active reader, and has a variety of books on display in their room. Children learn about compassion towards each other through a reward system which celebrates small and large gestures of kindness. This encourages positive behaviour.

Staff have appropriate conversations with children about their future plans. They listen carefully to children's wishes, and they advocate for children to ensure that outcomes match children's aspirations. Staff are prepared to challenge organisations when they feel decisions are not made in the best interests of children.

Children who live far from their home are supported to spend time with family and friends and those who are important to them. Staff have maintained links with families for children throughout the lockdown period.

Children's voices are heard, and their views are highly valued. Children speak confidently about their wishes and needs. Children know how to complain. Daily community meetings allow opportunities for children to speak about their day, and these encourage a sense of trust and positive relationships. As a result, they feel valued.

Children make good progress educationally. Children who were disengaged in education for long periods of time have engaged again and are achieving good outcomes. One child had not attended school for three years prior to coming to the home and now attends full time. Another child wants to apply for a school leadership role in the new school year.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Staff have a good understanding of the risks faced by children in their care. The matching and transition of children are given careful consideration. This preparation ensures the needs of all children involved are carefully considered. Risk assessments are regularly updated following any serious incidents.

Since the children have moved to the home, there has been a reduction in them going missing. There have been no missing episodes for several months. The number of safeguarding incidents is low.

Staff have a well-developed understanding of the impact of trauma and how this may be displayed in children's behaviours. This enables staff to be empathetic to children's behaviours and respond sensitively. Staff work patiently and creatively to minimise disruptive behaviour, and incidents have reduced in frequency for each child. Staff use proportionate restorative approaches to support children. Relationships between the children at the home are positive, and they relate to one another in ways similar to siblings.

Communication with the professional network creates a collaborative approach to supporting individual children. The clinical team has provided recent therapeutic training to the team. As a result, children benefit from a confident and consistent approach from well-trained staff.

Recruitment practice is, generally, good. However, one staff member's file showed that their full employment history was not obtained until after they had already commenced work. This omission had been identified by the manager through internal checks. However, the individual had been in post for several months when the matter was fully resolved. This compromises the safe recruitment of staff.

Most members of staff are first-aid trained and staff, generally, take all necessary actions to safeguard children. However, on one occasion, a child sustained a head injury and immediate medical advice was not sought. The child received professional medical attention the following day, but this delay had the potential to cause harm to the child's health.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has been in post since June 2020 but is not yet registered with Ofsted. Leaders share an exciting vision for enhancing the personal development and life chances of children in their care. The leadership team knows its service well and shares a constant desire to improve. An example of this is the weekly area management meetings to exchange good practice and key learning. There is an emphasis on PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) model of care that underpins the whole team's practice. Staff talk confidently about their model of care and this impacts positively on children and their outcomes.

Staff praise the support of managers and hold the leadership team in high regard. Staff describe managers as accessible at all times of the day and night. Appraisals and probation reports are completed on time and are of good quality. However, formal supervision is not provided regularly to all staff. The absence of consistent supervision reduces opportunities for staff to develop their practice as well as opportunities for managers to understand and improve the quality of this.

Following a previous visit to the home, a requirement was put in place in relation to the monitoring of staff training. Systems are in place now to track progress. However, one staff member has not completed all the mandatory training. The requirement is, therefore, repeated.

Two members of the staff team have gained the relevant level 3 diploma in residential childcare. The remainder of the staff team are enrolled on the relevant course. This means that currently only a small number of staff are trained to the minimum qualification, including staff who have been in post for some time.

Robust employment practice is not consistently applied. For one member of staff, actions identified to review and to support the development of their practice were not completed. As a result, it is not possible to ascertain whether the shortfalls in their practice remain.

Leaders work hard to maintain effective working relationships with external partners. Comments from professionals and parents are positive. Staff report serious incidents, such as allegations against staff, to relevant external safeguarding agencies and Ofsted, as required. However, there has been one instance where Ofsted was not notified. This compromises the regulator's ability to oversee the safeguarding practice in the home.

A previous recommendation was set relating to equality and diversity. Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have ensured that equality and diversity

is a regular topic for conversation with children. There have been racist incidents towards staff from children in the home. Leaders have actively liaised with other professionals to address these behaviours. Key-work sessions take place and diversity is discussed. Reparative work takes place with children to help rebuild relationships. Staff have introduced cultural evenings on a regular basis. This has enhanced children's understanding of the issues and of the importance of inclusion. This recommendation is met.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children.</p> <p>The conditions are—</p> <p>that the care is delivered by a person who—</p> <p>has the experience, knowledge and skills to deliver that care; and</p> <p>is under the supervision of a person who is appropriately skilled and qualified to supervise that care.</p> <p>(Regulation 6 (1)(a) (3)(c)(i)(ii))</p> <p>In particular, review skills and competencies for all staff and devise a plan to ensure mandatory training is up to date for all staff.</p>	9 July 2021
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there.</p> <p>(Regulation 40 (4)(c))</p> <p>In particular Ofsted must be notified alongside other safeguarding agencies if an allegation is made by a child against a member of staff.</p>	9 July 2021
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience</p>	9 July 2021

<p>(Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that all staff receive regular supervision that is formally recorded.</p>	
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety;</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2.</p> <p>(Regulation 32 (1) (3)(d))</p> <p>In particular, gaps in service to be explored during recruitment process prior to staff commencing work in the home.</p>	<p>9 July 2021</p>
<p>For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained—</p> <p>the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or</p> <p>a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma.</p> <p>(Regulation 32 (4)(a)(b))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure all staff are level 3 trained or enrolled promptly upon being employed.</p>	<p>9 July 2021</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

- The registered person should ensure that staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to respond to the health needs of children and to administer basic first aid and minor illness treatment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.12)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2534684

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Sadie Dangerfield

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Skye Frain, Social Care Inspector

Anna Williams, Social Care Regulatory Inspection Manager

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