

SC415347

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services (2) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private company that runs several children's homes across the country. This home provides care and accommodation for up to four children who have been affected by adverse childhood experiences that have led to associated trauma and complex behaviours.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2020 and she is currently completing her management qualification.

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.

Ofsted last visited this setting on 2 December 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. There were no serious and widespread concerns identified and the report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 14 to 15 July 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 23 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/10/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
13/06/2018	Full	Outstanding
16/03/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
11/09/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home is beautifully decorated, well-furnished and maintained to a high standard. Children take pride in their bedrooms. When talking about the décor, one child described her bedroom as 'completely me'. Other areas of the home are personalised with children's photos, and the home environment is spacious, which enables children to engage in meaningful activities. For example, staff have creatively adapted a lounge area, which children use as a gaming and cinema room. One child described how she uses the conservatory as a quiet room for reading. The homely atmosphere helps to create a sense of belonging for children.

Staff develop and maintain strong and supportive relationships with children. Children have told external professionals that they like living in the home and they feel supported by staff. These relationships help children to make progress in important areas of their lives.

Staff encourage children to attend school and engage with their education. Three children attend the company's in-house school. One professional stated that all three children have 'attendance of over 95% and are making good progress academically.' One child is on track to achieve all of her predicted GCSE grades. This level of progress has enabled children to secure college placements as they move into further education. The school professional commented that, 'children make progress, as a result of the support they receive from the home.'

Staff understand the complex needs of the children. As a result, they ensure that specialised support is provided to meet children's mental health needs. In addition, staff communicate and share regular updates with health professionals to support children effectively. This joined-up approach means that children receive the specialised support specific to their needs.

The registered manager ensures that children stay in touch with their family and friends. Additionally, staff work with children to overcome problems that may restrict periods of family time. This enables children to stay in touch with people who are important in their lives.

Children have a wide range of opportunities to share their views, wishes and feelings. For example, regular meetings and key-work sessions are held with children. The manager has good oversight of these and ensures that children have a range of different resources to help them express their views and participate in their care.

External professionals comment positively on the care that children receive. One professional commented that staff are 'in tune with [the child], they listen to her and meet her needs well.' The professional added, 'I work with lots of children's homes, but this is easily the best one I work with.'

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

Children feel safe living in the home. This is because they feel cared for by staff who know and understand them. One child stated that, 'the best thing about the home is the support staff give.' Another child explained, 'the staff are the best. I love them. They understand my emotions and if I get upset, they give me space but also check on me.' For one child, the support provided by staff has meant they go missing from home less often.'

The registered manager responds efficiently and effectively to allegations made by children. She ensures that senior leaders and the relevant external professionals are informed, to safeguard children. As a result, investigations are carried out in a timely manner and appropriate decisions are made to maintain children's safety and well-being.

Children rarely go missing from the home. Since the last inspection, there has been one missing episode involving two children. Staff followed the children's protocols effectively and worked in partnership with the police to return the children to the home. Furthermore, return home interviews were completed and information was shared with staff. This means that staff are suitably equipped to safeguard children.

Staff manage children's behaviour and significant incidents well. Consequently, there have been no incidents with children that required the use of physical intervention. When staff have had to issue a sanction to children, it was proportionate, appropriate and in line with the restorative approach used by staff in the home.

Staff educate children about bullying. For example, staff help children make a workbook about positive social interactions. This helps children understand behaviours that are acceptable, and the impact of bullying behaviours on others. This promotes positive behaviour and helps children feel safe.

Staff keep children safe online. The manager has good monitoring systems in place to ensure that children are safe when using the internet. Staff use creative activities to educate children about online safety. This supports children to develop skills to understand the risks posed by others.

The registered manager ensures that risk assessments are specific and well recorded. They highlight assessed risks effectively and have clear strategies for staff to follow to keep children safe. In contrast, some senior staff members and shift leaders were unable to describe the missing-from-home protocols in place for children. This gap in knowledge has the potential to leave children vulnerable.

The home uses alarms on bedroom doors to safeguard children. However, the registered manager does not always review the need for this type of measure in the home. Consequently, some children remain under surveillance when it is not necessary. This has the potential to restrict children's feelings of independence and dignity.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A child-focused manager leads the home. She is ambitious for the children and wants the best for them. She has a good understanding of the children's progress and their needs. This ensures that children receive good quality care.

The registered manager is approachable and supportive. She ensures that she is available to staff, and they have responded well to the improvements she has made since she took over. This supportive approach is underpinned by regular and reflective supervision sessions.

The home has a core team of regular staff, who provide consistent care for children. Staff have worked overtime to cover vacancies, which has reduced the need for the use of agency staff in the home. This means that children are consistently cared for by people who know them well.

Staff are provided with in-house coaching that helps to embed reflective practice. For example, staff receive upskilling which includes therapeutic care and language, shame as a result of trauma, and understanding post-traumatic stress disorder. Consequently, staff knowledge, the quality of their work and their confidence are improved.

The registered manager has a good oversight of the home. She makes good use of the audit tools and support systems in place. As a result, she understands the home's strengths and weaknesses. She regularly reviews the quality of care in the home and takes action to improve this where needed. As a result, she has a clear vision about how to improve the care provided to children.

The majority of staff have completed mandatory training. However, one member of staff has not completed safeguarding training and other staff are yet to complete first aid training. Also, the registered manager has not always been proactive in ensuring that staff receive training specific to their role, such as supervision training or training specific to the needs of the children. This means that staff are not always equipped to respond to the individual needs of the children, specifically in relation to eating disorders and gender identity.

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 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>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to staff training, with particular reference to staff completing mandatory safeguarding and first aid training. Furthermore, this relates to the relevant staff completing supervision training and specific courses related to eating disorders and gender identity.</p>	<p>19 August 2021</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should specify the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing from care or away from the home without permission and how staff should support the child on return to the home. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 45, paragraph 9.28)
- The registered person should ensure that children’s homes are nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children. Children’s homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc) and avoid an ‘institutional’ impression. In particular, the registered manager should review the need for bedroom doors alarms for each individual child. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: SC415347

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services (2) Limited

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

Responsible individual: Laura Duckers

Registered manager: Lisa Aspinall

Inspectors

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector

Natasha Skinner, Social Care Inspector

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