

# 2654620

Registered provider: Montage Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This privately run children's home provides care and accommodation for up to two children. The provider states in their statement of purpose that they provide care for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The home and the manager were registered with Ofsted on 17 September 2021. The first child was admitted to the home on 13 October 2021.

There was one child living in the home at the time of this inspection.

This inspection was conducted on site and involved meetings with staff and managers. Email and telephone contact took place with placing authority social workers and other professionals. The child living in the home did not want to engage in the inspection.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### Inspection dates: 15 and 16 December 2021

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,** taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

**Date of last inspection:** not applicable

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** not applicable

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Not previously inspected

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good**

The experiences and progress of the child living in the home are limited by the inconsistency of staff practice and the quality of care and support provided.

Leaders and managers, as well as the placing authority, report that the child is making some progress which is relative to her starting point. Before moving into this home, the child did not engage with previous staff at her home and other professionals. Furthermore, she did not engage in education or activities and spent most of her time in her bedroom alone. Since moving into this home, the child has slowly started to engage in some of these things. However, her engagement is limited due to the inconsistent approach and expectations of staff. Inspectors found that the child still spends the majority of her time in her bedroom and often communicates with staff by telephone and text message.

Staff do not put in place clear and structured boundaries and expectations for the child. They do not always follow agreed strategies to ensure that the child is provided with a consistent level of care. For example, if the child refuses to eat at mealtimes, staff do not always prepare meals for her. The child occasionally eats meals with staff and at other times she eats meals alone in her bedroom. Consequently, this does not ensure that the child receives a balanced diet of three meals a day. It also means that the child does not have consistent and structured routines to meet her needs, as outlined in her care plan. This has an impact on the child's progress and day-to-day experiences.

The child's health needs are understood by the registered manager and staff. Staff try to support the child to engage with health professionals, but this is not always successful. Positively, the child has attended one health appointment since moving into the home. However, the child's health needs are not well documented. The child did not have a health care plan until this was requested during the inspection. Additionally, details of the child's registered GP surgery were not available on the child's records. The child's main care plan also lacked other important information relating to her health. This is confusing and unhelpful for staff working with the child and potentially compromises their ability to meet the child's needs. The registered manager started to address these shortfalls during the inspection.

The child has not been in education for some time. However, since moving into the home she is now provided with four hours of home tuition per week. The child's engagement with this is limited. Although staff encourage the child to engage with tuition, this is often unsuccessful. The registered manager and staff do not consistently offer alternative educational activities while the child is not in full-time education. The child's engagement in education is compromised by her having access to the internet during school hours.

The placing authority has raised concerns about the poor condition of the child's bedroom. Although inspectors were not able to view the child's bedroom during the inspection, the registered manager reported that the condition of the child's bedroom has improved. Furthermore, records confirm that the registered manager and staff have supported the child to keep her bedroom clean and tidy.

The child's views, wishes and feelings are regularly sought by staff through key-work sessions and discussions. In addition, the child has access to an independent advocate. The registered manager responded well to a complaint made by the child and ensured that action was taken to address the issues raised. Furthermore, the child was informed as to what action had been taken. This demonstrates that the child is valued and listened to.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

Safeguarding practice is not sufficiently robust. The child's risk assessment includes all known and anticipated risks and the strategies to manage these. However, the risk levels do not accurately demonstrate the level of risk posed to the child and others. For example, risks relating to fire safety are high, yet the scoring system does not reflect this. Furthermore, staff do not always follow the strategies identified in risk assessments to keep the child and others safe from harm. Consequently, important safeguarding measures, such as monitoring the child's phone and conducting room searches, do not always happen. These inconsistencies compromise safeguarding practice.

Leaders and managers are unclear as to what is required by them to meet the conditions of a court order for the child. This is due to conflicting information and direction being given by the placing authority. This has resulted in the conditions of the court order not being fully adhered to in order to safeguard the child. However, leaders and managers have now taken action to address this.

The management of some incidents is poor. There have been two serious safeguarding incidents at the home. During one incident, staff were not able to manage the situation, which led to an escalation in the child's behaviour. Police attended the home to support staff and remained in the property when one member of staff had to leave due to being injured. This was due to the staffing levels not being sufficient and in line with the child's care plan. Leaders and managers have reflected on the incident and the shortfalls in staff practice. They have implemented an action plan to address the shortfalls to prevent this happening again.

Safer recruitment and employment practices are not sufficiently robust and important checks are not complete. For example, references are not verified, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) information is not recorded, full employment history is not obtained and references from previous employers are not on staff recruitment files. This does not prevent unsuitable people from working at the home or help to ensure the safety of children.

The child's voice is evidenced in key-work sessions. Staff encourage and support the child to engage in key-work sessions about specific issues to help her progress and development. This gives staff the opportunity to speak to the child about topics such as healthy eating, smoking, keeping her bedroom tidy and self-care. However, key-work sessions do not address other important subjects that could help to keep the child safe from risks, such as child exploitation and unhealthy relationships.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

The registered manager is suitably qualified and experienced for his role. He is supported by the responsible individual. However, the responsible individual is not able to attend the home in person. This compromises how effectively he is able to monitor the practice and development of the home, the manager and the staff team.

Leaders and managers are open and honest about the barriers that the staff team are experiencing. They accept that the leadership of the home needs to improve and that the staff team do not have the skills to meet the needs of the child. Staff do not always respond to the registered manager's direction and expectations of them. Consequently, the child's needs are not always met in line with her agreed plans.

The quality of records is variable. Some of the child's records do not include important information and the registered manager and senior staff have failed to identify this. This demonstrates a lack of effective management oversight and has an impact on the quality and consistency of care provided to the child.

Staff supervision records do not demonstrate that staff discuss and reflect on the needs of the child in their care. Furthermore, they do not have a strong focus on child protection. This does not help the manager and staff to identify training and development needs, which would help them to consistently provide good-quality care to the child.

The home's statement of purpose had not been updated and sent to Ofsted since July 2021. The statement of purpose did not include details of the staff team. The registered manager updated the statement of purpose and sent it to Ofsted during the inspection.

## 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>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>understand and apply the home’s statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>provide personalised care that meets each child’s needs, as recorded in the child’s relevant plans, taking account of the child’s background;</p> <p>help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect;</p> <p>make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child’s relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(iv)(v)(ix))</p>	<p>20 January 2022</p>
<p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p>	<p>20 January 2022</p>

<p>help each child to achieve the child’s education and training targets, as recorded in the child’s relevant plans;</p> <p>support each child’s learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study;</p> <p>promote opportunities for each child to learn informally;</p> <p>help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Reg 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(v)(viii))</p> <p>In particular, the child should be provided with structured routines when the child is not in education during school hours.</p>	
<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>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm. (Reg 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii))</p> <p>In particular, the manager and staff should ensure that the agreed strategies to safeguard the child are followed.</p>	20 January 2022
<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>	20 January 2022

<p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Reg 32 (1) (3)(d))</p> <p>In particular, to ensure full employment history is obtained, DBS information is recorded, references are received from last employers, and that all references are verified.</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>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Reg 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(d)(e)(f)(h))</p>	<p>20 January 2022</p>
<p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out—</p> <p>how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and</p> <p>the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home.</p> <p>The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. (Reg 35 (1)(a)(b) (2))</p>	<p>20 January 2022</p>

<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p> <p>are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Reg 36 (1)(a)(b))</p> <p>In particular, include recording of children’s ethnicity and cultural background, diagnosis, registered GP details and health care plan.</p>	<p>20 January 2022</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Reg 33 (4)(b))</p> <p>In particular, supervision must focus on the needs of the child and child protection.</p>	<p>20 January 2022</p>
<p>A responsible individual must—</p> <p>have the capacity, experience and skills to supervise the management of the home, or the homes, in respect of which the responsible individual is nominated. (Reg 26 (7)(b))</p> <p>In particular, the responsible individual should effectively monitor the practice and development of the home, manager and staff team.</p>	<p>20 January 2022</p>

## Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the home’s statement of purpose is regularly updated and sent to the regulator. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 14, paragraph 3.5)

## **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:** 2654620

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Montage Services Limited

**Responsible individual:** Anthony McKenzie

**Registered manager:** Liam McDermott

## Inspectors

Leanne Grant, Social Care Inspector

Lisa Mulcahy, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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