

SC462951

Registered provider: ERA Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by an independent provider. It provides care for up to three children aged between 11 and 18 with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2021.

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.

We last visited this setting on 10 March 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 February 2022

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: 17 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/12/2019	Full	Good
07/02/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
30/05/2018	Full	Good
17/01/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, two children have lived at the home. One child moved to another children's home in September 2021 after a planned psychological assessment. One child moved to semi-independent living in January 2022. At the time of this inspection, no children were living at the home.

The home is welcoming and well maintained. There are activities available which are suitable for the age range of the children for whom the home offers care. The manager has created a private study area for children. Children have welcome packs and small gift boxes of toiletries in their bedrooms. This helps children to feel welcomed and to develop a sense of belonging.

The manager works with social workers and families to understand children's needs before they move into the home. This helps staff to understand children's vulnerabilities and how to respond. Staff are able to build relationships with children who find it difficult to trust adults.

Staff have involved children in planning their care and support. Children engaged in discussions with staff about the issues that are important to them. Staff are sensitive to children's mental and emotional health needs. Care plans are detailed and reflect how the child would like to be cared for by staff.

One child did not engage in education, despite staff's attempts to help him. The child was enrolled in school and college but chose not to attend. Staff remained persistent in sourcing other education opportunities. They worked closely with the virtual headteacher to find courses that reflected the child's interests. Staff worked alongside the home's therapy team to provide the child with emotional support to overcome the barriers that he faced. As a result of the staff's approach, the child engaged in a semi-independent living plan. He successfully learned to manage a budget, plan menus and cook.

Staff knew the children well. They recognised their strengths and ensured that children took part in the activities that they enjoyed. One child was taken on holiday, where he went fishing for the first time. This became a hobby. One child made progress in cooking himself fresh meals. Staff helped children to make progress in areas that interested them. This helped to improve children's self-esteem and confidence.

Staff supported children to spend time with their families. One child asked the staff to help him use public transport so that he could travel to his family independently. Staff helped him to read timetables, plan a route and budget for bus tickets.

Children were engaged in weekly meetings with each other. They planned their own activities and talked through any issues that they had in living together. Children were helped to develop social skills and maintain relationships.

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

The manager follows safeguarding procedures effectively in response to safeguarding concerns. He notifies the relevant professionals and Ofsted when concerns arise. Staff receive a range of safeguarding training to understand risk factors for children and how to keep them safe.

Staff work with the local police to identify areas of risk in the local community. The home's location assessment is detailed. Staff take children on a tour of the local area when they arrive at the home. The police visit the home to meet children when they move in. This helps children to understand the risks in the community and to develop positive relationships with the police.

Physical interventions are only used to keep children and others safe. Effective recording systems include all required information. The manager evaluates the use of physical interventions effectively and uses the learning from these evaluations to improve practice. Children and staff are debriefed promptly after an incident. This helps children to talk about their feelings without delay.

Staff understand that children's behaviour is a response to their trauma. The staff worked with the home's therapist to learn how they can help children to talk about their past experiences. Staff met with children through planned discussions to explore emotions and discuss areas of concern. Children engaged well in meetings with staff. One child, before they left the home, said, 'I respect what the staff have done to help me.' Specialist input and advice provided for the staff has resulted in good support for children.

Recruitment processes are thorough. The induction is detailed and encourages staff to reflect on their work with children. The manager helps new staff to understand trauma, relationships and maintaining professional boundaries. Children receive care from staff who are suitable and understand the complexity of building relationships with them.

Children's care plans are detailed. However, risk assessments do not always accurately record measures to keep children safe. One child did not have a risk assessment for the use of sharp tools and managing his own medication. This led to him requiring medical attention. Lack of clear guidance to reduce risks to children does not enable staff to care for children safely and consistently.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is suitably experienced and qualified. He is supported by two deputy managers. The management team provides stability and direction to the staff, who feel well supported by the managers.

The manager has met both the requirements that were raised at the last inspection. The staff have a better understanding of the use of sanctions. Most staff hold a relevant level 3 diploma and other staff are within timescales to achieve it. Children are cared for by suitably qualified staff.

The manager uses effective monitoring systems. He carries out daily audits and quickly addresses any areas of concern. The records of incidents and accidents are evaluated promptly. The manager has used learning from children's placements to inform future practice.

There is a stable staff team. This ensures that children receive consistent and predictable care. The staff work well together. There is a focus on providing a caring environment for children to live in.

Staff are trained to meet the needs of children. The manager provides a breadth of training opportunities for staff. He is committed to making further improvements. The manager is working closely with the home's therapist to introduce a new model of care.

Staff receive regular supervision from managers who have received supervision training. Staff use this time to reflect on their practice and safeguarding and to identify areas for development. The manager has made certain that all staff have a signed supervision agreement and understand the importance of engaging in the meeting.

Staff meetings are held regularly and are informative. Meetings involve discussion about children's needs and vulnerabilities. There is a focus on children's trauma and how staff will help them to process it. Staff use these meetings as informal learning opportunities and space to reflect together.

The manager and staff continued to provide stability and routine for children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff helped children to understand the importance of social distancing. The staff and children created socially distanced games together when one child tested positive for COVID-19. Staff reduced the impact of isolation and lockdown on children's mental health.

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>help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii))</p> <p>In particular, fully assess the risks to children when undertaking activities and the risks of self-administration of any medicines.</p>	25 February 2022

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: SC462951

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: ERA Care Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 3a, The Maltings, Station Road,
Sawbridgeworth CM21 9JX

Responsible individual: Miliano Mile

Registered manager: Francis Williams

Inspector

Mandy Start, Social Care Inspector

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