

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.

There has been no registered manager since April 2022.

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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: 15 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/02/2022	Full	Good
17/12/2019	Full	Good
07/02/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
30/05/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Since the last inspection, two children have lived at the home. One child moved out because managers felt that they were unable to meet the child's needs. Notice has also been served on the other child's placement, as managers again feel that they are unable to meet this child's needs. Progress for children has therefore been limited. This had been affected by the shortfalls that have been identified in help and protection and leadership and management.

Educational outcomes for children have been mixed. One child had one-to-one tuition in place. Staff were supportive of this and encouraged and prioritised the child's engagement. However, for the other child, no education provision is in place. Managers have failed to challenge the child's placing authority effectively to ensure that a provision is identified for them. A failure to advocate effectively for the child has meant that this shortfall has not been adequately addressed.

Staff have a good understanding of children's needs and build positive relationships with them. They provide good support for children when they move to the home. One child said that they felt welcomed by all of the staff when they moved in and that they feel able to talk to staff if they have any worries.

Children's views are actively sought and responded to. Regular children's meetings and key-work sessions ensure that different aspects of children's care are discussed with them. This helps children feel listened to and involved in the care that they receive.

Children are offered a good range of activities. For one child, who needed a high level of staff interaction, staff understood that providing different opportunities to engage in activities helped them to be more settled.

Two complaints have been received since the last inspection, both relating to children's behaviour in the locality of the home. Managers have responded appropriately and ensured that the issues raised were discussed with children. This had a positive effect on children's behaviour in the community.

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

Assessments made by managers in advance of children moving into the home are of poor quality. A lack of curiosity about some known risks has meant that these risks have not been adequately explored and understood. Assessments have failed to consider risks to children in the home's location. In addition, a placement planning meeting for one child did not happen for nearly two weeks. Consequently, information about the child which was not included in the referral paperwork was

not all known until the meeting took place. This information has subsequently affected managers' views on whether the home can meet the child's needs, leading to notice being given on the child's placement. Poor-quality assessments and a failure to understand risks has had an impact on children's care and led to further disruption for them.

There have been significant and ongoing concerns related to missing-from-home episodes, substance misuse and, for one child, possible exploitation. The child's risk assessment covers the known risks and includes strategies for staff to help reduce these. Staff respond to missing-from-home episodes in line with the child's plans and are proactive in looking for the child. However, only one return home interview has been offered to the child by their placing authority. This means that, for most incidents, there has not been proper exploration of where the child has been and any risks that they may have been subject to. Managers have failed to work with the placing authority to ensure that they offer return home interviews. A failure to effectively respond to missing-from-home episodes alongside other professionals has meant that the related risks are not properly understood.

Staff have responded to some high levels of unwanted behaviour and managed such incidents well, working in line with the child's plans. The staff used different strategies to help the child at times of distress. Police support has been requested on some occasions, but only as a last resort to keep people safe.

Use of restraint is rare. When restraint has been used, it has been done so appropriately and the records are clear. Debriefs have taken place with the child and staff, which have enabled learning from incidents.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The previous manager, who is also a director of the organisation, is still in day-to-day charge, after the person who planned to apply for registration left the organisation. The previous manager intends to reapply for registration.

External monitoring is of poor quality. Since the last inspection, there have only been two visits from the independent person, with two visits being missed. Only one report has been sent to Ofsted during this time. This report contained no feedback from children or others and it did not give a view as to whether children are safeguarded effectively and their well-being promoted. Managers have failed to identify the shortfalls in external monitoring. Poor-quality external monitoring has affected managers' ability to recognise shortfalls and make improvements.

Staff said that they feel well supported and that managers are available to them. However, staff supervisions have not taken place regularly. There have been significant challenges relating to how children's needs are being met. There has been a failure to offer the individualised support that supervision provides. Consequently, opportunities to consider how effectively staff are working with children and reflect on this have been missed.

Internal monitoring is ineffective. Managers have failed to identify and address shortfalls in relation to ensuring that staff have up-to-date paperwork from children's placing authorities, the supervision of staff and external monitoring. This has meant that improvements in these areas have not been made.

Information about children is appropriately shared with external professionals, including concerns about risks that children are subject to. However, managers have failed to address concerns about the service that one child is receiving from their placing authority. Concerns relating to inaccurate paperwork, a lack of education provision and delays in arranging important meetings have not been escalated. A failure to challenge and escalate these concerns has meant improvements to the service the child is receiving have not happened.

Most staff hold a relevant level 3 diploma, and those who are not are working towards it. Staff undertake a wide range of training and can identify how this has benefited them in their roles. Good training helps to ensure that staff are properly equipped for their roles.

Team meetings take place regularly and are well attended. These provide staff with the opportunity to discuss how they are working with children and share ideas about how they can do so more effectively.

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>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c))</p>	1 August 2022
<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>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare;</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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(vi)(b))</p> <p>In particular:</p> <p>ensure that pre-admission assessments for children appropriately explore all known risks, including those relating to the area where the home is located, and consider how these will be managed;</p> <p>ensure that when children are not offered return home interviews after incidents of going missing, this is appropriately escalated with the child's placing local authority to ensure that risks relating to such incidents are fully understood.</p>	18 July 2022

<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>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))</p>	<p>1 August 2022</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p>	<p>1 August 2022</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month.</p> <p>When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person—</p> <p>if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires.</p> <p>The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether—</p> <p>children are effectively safeguarded; and</p> <p>the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.</p> <p>The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to—</p> <p>HMCI. (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a) (4)(a)(b) (7)(a))</p>	<p>1 August 2022</p>

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: Post vacant

Inspector

Joe Cox, Social Care Inspector

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