

2654620

Registered provider: Montage Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care for up to two children. The home's statement of purpose states that the home provides care for children who require a single occupancy home or dual placement and are presenting with social and emotional difficulties and may have additional mental health and educational needs.

The home and the manager registered with Ofsted on 17 September 2021.

One child was living in the home at the time of this inspection. A deprivation of liberty order (DLO) is in place for this child.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 August 2022

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 **good**

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: 9 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/02/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
15/12/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

Children do not always have positive experiences. Although staff recall occasions when the child has appeared to be really enjoying themselves, the child says that they are not happy at this home and have never really settled in.

Staff do not fully understand the complex needs of children. Although the home's support plan for the child is comprehensive, the actual care provided is not bespoke enough. In practice, staff do not always consider the impact of autism spectrum disorder on the child's feelings and behaviours, for example the impact of the unexpected change to the child's routine or the small changes to the child's pre-agreed food menu.

Staff's ability to form positive relationships with children is limited. Despite staff's best efforts, the child describes some staff as 'uncaring'.

Through key-work sessions and other meetings, staff provide many opportunities for children to express their views. However, the child says that they do not feel that staff really listen to them. The child is clear about why they feel unheard and showed compelling examples of this to the inspector. The clarity and the eloquence with which the child shared their views with the inspector was excellent.

Staff promote children's progress and celebrate their achievements. Staff highlighted the child's many positive outcomes. The child's social worker reports that staff have done an incredible job to get the child where they are now. However, staff are slow to begin to allow the child to have more freedom. Although the DLO changed the staff ratio on 26 April 2022 from three to two staff, the home has not acted on this.

The child accesses education through home tutoring and online. The provision is limited to six hours a week. The child's engagement in education, although inconsistent, is showing signs of progress. The child recently secured a place at a college from September 2022 and is looking forward to learning with peers in a mainstream environment.

Staff help children to live healthy lives. The child enjoys swimming and is eating more fruit. The child has attended some health appointments recently, which is a positive development.

The arrangements for the safe storage and administration of medication in the home are suitable. However, there are inconsistencies in some medication records. Although minor, these create an easily avoidable risk.

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

The insecure relationships between the child and some staff members undermine the child's sense of safety. When the child was asked if they feel safe, the child said that sometimes they do. The child went on to say that they do not feel safe when some staff are on duty.

Staff do not always understand the difficulties that a child with autism spectrum disorder may have when processing emotions or changes, such as when physically moving from one place to another. An example of this is giving a negative consequence to a child because the child took too long to get out of a car, after an incident. Banning the child from travelling in the car is not a suitable sanction because, in the past, the child has spent significant time in isolation from the community. Going out to places and having greater community integration are signs of big progress for this child. On one occasion, staff used a sanction relating to food. Although the child had access to enough food, this sanction was inappropriate.

Staff support children in line with the individual positive behaviour management plans. The last time staff had to intervene physically to protect the child and staff was over seven months ago. This demonstrates that the child has made progress in self-regulation and the development of more constructive behaviours. However, this progress has not been linear. The frequency and severity of incidents were reducing. However, recently, there have been several significant incidents, including threatening and assaulting staff.

The quality of record-keeping is sometimes insufficient to demonstrate sound safeguarding practices. The record of one incident, which potentially carried a high risk, provides inconsistent information and fails to give assurance that the most protective actions were taken at the time.

The child's risk management plan states that staff will follow the missing-from-home protocol if a child is not in line of sight of staff and the child's whereabouts are unknown. The DLO fully supports this plan. On one occasion, the child left the home alone in a taxi. Reportedly, the child sent a text message to staff after 10 minutes and returned home within 20 minutes. The timings and the safeguarding actions taken by staff are unclear from the records. The manager informed the child's social worker and mother about the incident the following day.

Another area for improvement relates to staff recruitment information. The records on staff's files do not show that a safe recruitment procedure was followed for all staff. This undermines the safeguarding of children.

Fire safety arrangements in the home are strong. All staff are fire marshals, and the child has completed fire safety training. Staff have managed two fire-setting incidents well and nobody was hurt.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers are ambitious for children and for the development of the home. They have taken many actions to improve the service since their first inspection. Achieving good practices consistently is still a work in progress.

The provider recruits and retains enough staff. The home maintains high staffing levels without the use of any agency staff. The roster demonstrates this and the continuity of staffing.

In line with the staffing shortages within the sector, the staff team is relatively inexperienced. About three quarters of staff are new to working in a children's home. Many of them come with transferable skills from previous roles, such as working in schools or supporting vulnerable adults. Staff receive a comprehensive induction which equips them to understand the expectations of their role.

The manager is aware of the team's strengths and areas for development. There are suitable arrangements in place to upskill the staff team. Probationary appraisals help to identify individual training needs and to formulate the staff workforce development plan. The management team is suitably qualified, and staff are supported to gain relevant qualifications for their roles, within the required timescales.

Staff receive training on a comprehensive range of relevant topics, online and face to face. Some training is specially created for the team, having in mind the specific needs of the child in placement. The training helps staff to build on their knowledge and understanding. This is a work in progress.

Regular team meetings and individual supervision meetings provide opportunities for staff to talk about their practices. However, the meetings do not always enable staff to reflect on how their own feelings and behaviour may be affected by the behaviour of the child they care for. Improved self-awareness of staff is likely to create more space for empathy and more measured responses.

The service is monitored well. An independent professional provides thorough monthly monitoring visits. A consultant also audited the service recently. This is in addition to the responsible individual's monthly audits and the manager's six-monthly quality of care reviews.

Leaders and managers have identified that the quality of some records needs to improve. They are introducing a different arrangement for keeping the staff rota up to date. During the inspection, leaders and managers started creating the registers required under regulation of children and staff. The statement of purpose and the information on the provider's website require some minor revisions to provide clear, consistent and accurate information.

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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i))</p> <p>Specifically, the registered person must ensure that records evidence that staff take appropriate safeguarding actions when children are absent/missing from home, in line with their agreed risk management plans.</p>	1 September 2022
<p>No measure of control or discipline which is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (2) may be used in relation to any child.</p> <p>The following measures may not be used to discipline any child—</p> <p>any punishment involving the consumption or deprivation of food or drink. (Regulation 19 (1) (2)(b))</p> <p>Specifically, the registered person must ensure that the child's needs are considered when administering sanctions and that sanctions relating to the choice of food are not used.</p>	1 September 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>	1 October 2022

full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(d))	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that both the statement of purpose and the provider's website provide clear, consistent and accurate information about the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)
- The registered person should ensure that staff have the skills to understand the importance of listening to, involving, and responding to the children they care for. Children must be able to see that their views are listened to acted on. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.10)
- The registered person should ensure that medication records are clear and unambiguous. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- The registered person should ensure that staff have the skills to build constructive and warm relationships. They should know how to maintain constructive dialogues and react appropriately if challenged by a child in their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.14)
- The registered person should ensure that supervision enables staff to reflect and act on how their own feelings and behaviour may be affected by the behaviour of the children they care for. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.15)

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

Inspector

Seka Graovac, Social Care Inspector

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