

2534684

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. The home provides care for up to five children with social and emotional difficulties. Three children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The registered manager's post has been a vacant since November 2023.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 February 2024

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: 17 May 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/05/2022	Full	Good
20/05/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

There is currently insufficient staffing to effectively meet the needs of the children. Consequently, the provider has taken the decision to move two children on from the home. They have also made the decision not to move any new children into the home until the staffing levels improve. This means that children are experiencing instability and disruption, which are negatively impacting on their progress and everyday experiences.

Several members of staff have left the home since the last inspection. The children have found this difficult. The remaining staff have done well to support children emotionally through these changes. For example, they have completed some work with the clinical lead from the organisation around loss and grief. This has helped to ensure that staff have the tools to appropriately support the emotional needs of children at a challenging time.

Children's documentation does not consistently reflect the work that has been completed with them by staff. As a result, children's records do not include sufficient and current information to support staff to fully meet children's needs. For example, records are missing children's education plans, up-to-date local authority care plans, and minutes from children's review meetings.

Children's progress is captured inconsistently. Children's targets, which are there to support staff in helping children to make progress, are inconsistent and are not regularly reviewed. This means that children are not making as much progress as they could.

Key-worker sessions that children have with staff are also inconsistent. When they do happen, the records do not fully capture the work that was done. Key-worker sessions are further compromised due to the constraints of the two core staff members who are having to spread themselves thinly in their roles. This has contributed to the poor quality of records kept. However, two new members of staff have recently joined the home and there are plans to upskill the staff in this area.

Children enjoy a variety of activities. They are encouraged by staff to try out different activities. One child plays the trumpet and attends weekly lessons. This helps to enhance the child's social connections.

Children are engaged in education, and most are making positive progress. Staff promote regular school attendance and support children with their future plans and ambitions. However, staff do not have an up-to-date education, health and care plan for one child. This has compromised their progress.

Staff advocate for and support children to spend time with people who are important to them. Friendships are encouraged, and staff support children to spend time with friends. This helps to ensure that the children maintain important relationships.

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

The response to how allegations are managed against staff is inconsistent. On one occasion, an allegation was not reported to the relevant safeguarding agencies immediately. Instead, the child was asked about specific details of the incident and the member of staff implicated in the allegation contributed to the discussion. Although the allegation was reported to safeguarding partners following this, the safeguarding process was undermined and not child centred.

Although staff engage children in one-to-one discussions to help them to understand the implications of risk-taking behaviours, this practice is inconsistent. For example, the children were involved in an incident that compromised their privacy. However, children have not been given the opportunity to learn from this. This is a missed opportunity for children to learn about appropriate behaviour.

Although there has been a decrease in missing-from-home incidents, there was a serious incident when several children went missing together overnight. This was triggered by a member of staff moving on from the home. Despite the missing-from-home procedures being followed by staff, they were ineffective. Contingency plans were not in place to manage the seriousness of this incident, and this subsequently compromised children's safety. Leaders identified learning following this incident and, consequently, there have been no further missing-from-home incidents.

There have been two medication errors. One related to staff not ensuring that a child had taken their medication, and another involved an incorrect dosage being administered. Appropriate action was taken following these incidents and learning was identified to minimise the likelihood of a reoccurrence.

Staff do not effectively manage some of the children's behaviours that are challenging. This has had a detrimental impact on children's feelings of safety and overall progress. For example, one child has experienced difficulty in sleeping due to staff not being able to effectively manage aggressive incidents between other children in the home. This lack of sleep has negatively impacted on the child's learning at school.

There are robust safer recruitment processes in place. This has ensured that only appropriate adults are appointed to work with children.

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

The registered manager moved on from the home in November 2023. A new manager was appointed at the same time, and they are in the process of submitting

their application to register with Ofsted. A new responsible individual joined the home in June 2023. Therefore, there has been significant changes to the leadership and management of the home since the last inspection.

Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in the home. There is a robust plan and support package in place to make improvements. The focus for the year ahead is on recruitment, training, and upskilling staff. This is to ensure that there are appropriate staff to meet the needs of the children.

The new manager has high aspirations for the home. She is well supported to develop the staff's practice and make the required improvements to the quality of care that children receive. However, these are new processes that are being developed and are not yet embedded. This will take some time, especially as the staff team is new and still being developed.

In January 2024, leaders took the decision to move children on from the home due to the staffing situation. Consequently, two children are due to move on from the home imminently. These plans are subject to review. Leaders say that this action is necessary and is the only way that they can ensure that children can have their individual needs met. However, this situation has been detrimental to children's feelings of security and stability, and has resulted in a poor outcome for them.

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>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</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>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(h))</p>	1 April 2024
<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 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</p>	1 April 2024

<p>necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(vi)(vii))</p>	
<p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust; and</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;</p> <p>communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding;</p> <p>help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(ii)(v)(vi))</p>	<p>1 April 2024</p>
<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. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b))</p>	<p>1 April 2024</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. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b))</p>	<p>1 April 2024</p>
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they have the most-recent education, health and care plan for children who have them. This is so staff can use the relevant information to provide support to children with special educational needs. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 26, paragraph 5.4)

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: 2534684

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Jodie Parker

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Karen Flanagan de Martinez, Social Care Inspector

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