

1244283

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The manager is not currently registered with Ofsted, but has submitted their application.

Visit dates: 16 to 17 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 10 March 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Young people enjoy warm and nurturing relationships with the manager and staff. Young people say that staff are nice and approachable, and listen to what they have to say. They know that staff want them to be happy and are always there to help them.

Young people benefit from suitable daily routines, structure and consistent boundaries. Strategies have recently been revised to bring in routines that are more in keeping with young people's age and understanding. This is helping young people to settle better at night with the implementation of activities such as bedtime and reading.

Young people have continued to maintain family contact during the COVID-19 restrictions. Revised strategies have been put in place by staff to ensure that there is minimal disruption to family contact during the restrictions. Staff understand the complexities around family contact and the impact that this can have on young people's well-being. This enables staff to handle sensitivities with good care and insight.

Young people are back in full-time education. They are making good progress from their starting points and have excellent attendance. One young person received a special award for writing an article about World War I. The manager and staff supported young people's education well when the schools were shut by obtaining learning resources and putting leisure activities in place to help sustain young people's motivation levels.

Leading a healthy lifestyle is suitably promoted within the home. Young people learn about the importance of eating healthily using a food-blending machine to make fruit smoothies. They benefit from eating homecooked meals, which they help to prepare. Young people take part in a range of physical activities, such as dancing and walking, which help them to clear their minds and burn off energy.

Staff monitor young people's emotional well-being carefully and seek professional advice when necessary. Over time, young people's confidence, self-esteem and pride in their appearance have improved. They are beginning to learn how to self-regulate their feelings of anger and frustration. They are also becoming increasingly aware of the importance of meeting their own personal hygiene needs.

The safety of children

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of their role and responsibilities in keeping young people safe from harm. They detect risk well and take suitable action in response to incidents such as episodes of going missing from the home and potential online bullying.

Risk assessments are regularly updated to reflect the current risk factors, and staff show that they are implementing the strategies in place.

Young people say that they feel safe. They show an increasing awareness of the need at times for staff to put measures in place for their own protection. Restraint is only used as a last resort to keep young people and others safe when all other methods have been tried. The necessary debriefs and support sessions with young people take place in a timely manner. There has been a recent reduction in incidents of restraint. This indicates a positive impact of the work that is being done in tackling challenging behaviours, for example the use of incentives and rewards.

Young people feel able to talk to the manager and staff about their worries or anxieties. They know that staff will take their concerns seriously and sort them out where possible. Active engagement with the in-house therapist is also beneficial in helping young people express their emotions through play in a safe, nurturing environment.

Staff keep detailed records of all serious incidents, including restraints. Records, however, do not demonstrate the action or response taken when allegations against staff have been made by young people, including any consultation or referral to the local authority designated officer for safeguarding. This places young people at potential risk of harm.

The manager, who is only recently in post, is limited in her knowledge of past safeguarding events and has not picked up weaknesses in the home's safeguarding practice and procedure.

Staff support young people to manage their own safety in and outside the home. They help young people to see and recognise the dangers associated with internet use and social media. Restrictive measures are put in place where necessary. Staff keep young people updated about COVID-19 news and remind them of the rules in place, with government guidance in mind.

Leaders and managers

The manager and staff have dealt with restrictions during COVID-19 appropriately. This has been achieved by keeping young people informed and ensuring that they take the necessary precautions to stay safe and healthy. The manager and staff place the well-being of young people at the heart of their practice and decision-making.

A new manager has recently been appointed. She has applied to register with Ofsted. The manager operates an open-door policy and staff say that they find the manager approachable and supportive. Regular practice-related supervision and team meetings enable staff to reflect on their work with young people, share good practice and identify their learning needs.

The new manager shows good initiative. She has implemented new ideas and ways of working that have been embraced by staff. The staff team members work collectively to provide continuity of care. Staff work well together and provide young people with consistent care and support. Staff have good insight into young people's needs and know them well. Staff have been able to continue to develop their skills and knowledge through relevant training.

Young people's plans have continued to be followed and are reviewed regularly with input from the in-house therapist. The manager and staff maintain contact with partner agencies such as those in education in ensuring that young people's progress stays on track and their needs continue to be met.

However, monitoring and review systems are not robust, in that the process and procedure for managing safeguarding allegations are not always followed. A lack of consultation with the local authority designated officer means that partnership with external agencies is ineffective and does not demonstrate openness and transparency.

The review of the quality of care report does not show what young people say about living in the home and how their views are used to inform continued improvement in the support they receive. The requirement set at the last inspection relating to children's case records is now met. However, new requirements are raised from this visit.

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
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.	13 January 2021

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(g)(ii)(h)) This specifically relates to ensuring that there is robust oversight and monitoring of record keeping. Records must be accurate and accessible, and demonstrate that the processes and practice of the home are consistently followed, and that any lessons learned are identified and acted on. The feedback obtained from children should be used to inform the manager's review of the quality of care and continuous improvement.	
The policies for the protection of children standard is that the registered person must prepare and implement a policy which— is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect; and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular— provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located; provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response. (Regulation 34(1)(a)(b)2(c)(d)(d))	13 January 2021
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—	13 January 2021

there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(4)(b)(c)(d)(i)((ii)))	
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— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children’s well-being. (Regulation 44(1)(4)(a)(b))	13 January 2021

Children’s home details

Unique reference number: 1244283

Registered provider: Sandcastle Care Ltd

Registered provider address: 49 Whitegate Drive, Blackpool FY3 9DG

Responsible individual: Natalie Yates

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Michael Charnley, Social Care Inspector

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