

1244493

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This is a private children's home registered for up to four children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since February 2018.

Visit dates: 7 to 8 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 27 November 2019

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 thrive in a caring and supportive environment. Relationships between young people and the adults who care for them are warm and trusting. As a result, young people grow in confidence and ability.

Throughout lockdown, young people's relationships with their families have been prioritised and promoted in a safe manner. This has supported young people's sense of identity and belonging. It has contributed to providing a degree of normality during a time of uncertainty.

Young people's physical and emotional health needs are quickly identified and plans put in place to address any unmet needs. A health professional told the inspector, 'They go above and beyond for the young people they care for. They know them really well.'

Staff have acted promptly to identify specialist services needed for an unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person who has been admitted to the home during the reporting period. As a result of this action, the young person has the services in place that he needs to support his social, emotional and cultural needs. The diversity of the staff team means that staff can communicate with the young person in a shared language while supporting him to develop English language skills.

Most young people are accessing education which is appropriate to their needs. Over recent months, young people have been supported to access online learning. The registered manager has advocated on behalf of one young person who does not yet have educational provision in place. To date, this has not resulted in the provision of education. In the interim, the home's staff have supported his learning by providing their own informal educational opportunities.

The safety of children

The members of the staff team understand the differing risks associated with each young person. Young people's individual needs are taken into account when planning for their care. As a result, young people are kept safe.

The staff team's detailed knowledge of each young person means that risk, particularly in relation to young people with additional cognitive needs, is managed in ways which keep young people safe while promoting independence. An independent reviewing officer told the inspector, 'The young person's individuality is respected and promoted. His independence is encouraged and appraised realistically.'

In the reporting period, there has only been one physical intervention and one missing-from-care incident. The response of staff to both of these incidents was prompt and staff acted in the best interests of young people. Recording of incidents is thorough and supports a good understanding of events and the actions taken by staff.

During lockdown, young people's well-being has been supported by a wide range of in-house activities. These have helped young people to maintain good emotional health and have consolidated the strength of relationships between staff and young people.

Leaders and managers

The home is led by an experienced and skilled registered manager. The manager has supported the staff team to deal with the challenges of the reporting period in a creative and positive manner. As a result, staff have been able to deliver consistent, good-quality care for young people.

Staff receive regular supervision which provides them with appropriate support and challenge. Regular team meetings ensure that information is regularly shared. Records of supervision and team meetings are thorough. These mechanisms of support and oversight mean that staff are provided, on an individual and team basis, with the information and knowledge to deliver child-centred practice.

During lockdown, external monitoring of the home through independent person visits has largely been conducted virtually. This monitoring has continued to provide some oversight and challenge. Clear assessments of the quality of care and the safety of young people continue to be provided. This external monitoring, in conjunction with the registered manager's own internal oversight, means that the home is in a good position to address areas of development and build on strengths.

The registered manager has developed positive relationships with family members, professionals and key services in the local community. This means that young people benefit from well-coordinated and informed care that promotes their progress and improves their experiences.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Homes are required to develop and keep under review a "Statement of Purpose" (regulation 16 and schedule 1). The home's Statement of Purpose should be child-focused, indicating how the home provides individualised care to meet the Quality Standards for the children in their care. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5). Specifically, that the statement of purpose should be updated to accurately reflect the current use of CCTV monitoring.
- Local authorities have a duty under section 22(3A) of the Children Act 1989 to promote the educational achievement of their looked-after children, which includes, as set out in guidance, seeking a school or other education setting that is best suited to the child's needs. The local authorities' responsibilities as corporate parent apply wherever the child is placed. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 27, paragraph 5.5). Specifically, that the

registered manager escalates concerns to the virtual school head when young people are not being provided with education within reasonable timescales.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1244493

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Children's Homes Limited

Registered provider address: 34 Church Street, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 1JJ

Responsible individual: Ahtesham-UI Haque

Registered manager: Ali Sajjad

Inspector

Dawn Parton, Social Care Inspector

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