

1245390

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

This children's home is privately owned and is registered to care for up to five children and young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

**Visit dates:** 3 to 4 December 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 11 September 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 identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Young people have been at potential risk of harm at times.
- The staff team does not have the skills, knowledge or experience to provide consistently safe care.
- Staff have not functioned effectively when the managers are not on shift.
- The police have been repeatedly contacted to manage incidents within the home.
- Staff did not recognise the indicators of a potential conflict. They have failed to take effective action to manage the behaviours of young people.
- Staff have not managed relationships between young people to prevent them from harming each other.
- The registered provider has failed to monitor effectively the behaviours of young people to bring about improvements in the quality of care.

### The care of children

Since the last inspection, this home has experienced a period of disruption. This is because of negative dynamics between the young people. These dynamics, and resulting behaviours, have had a negative impact on the quality of young people's day-to-day experiences.

Young people and social care professionals have expressed positive views about this home. However, a series of widespread staff failures have put young people at risk of harm.

From their starting points, the three young people currently in placement have developed and made progress at this home. Education is promoted. Young people's health needs are understood and addressed. Arrangements to support family contact promote the young people's sense of heritage and identity.

Independence skills are taught in line with young people's age and understanding. Over time, young people learn more complex tasks. This means that young people develop age-appropriate and vital life skills.

### The safety of children

The arrangements for safeguarding young people need improvement.

The staff team is inexperienced, and staff lack the skills and the confidence to manage behaviour effectively, before situations escalate. When managers are not on site, there is a higher incidence of staff failure to manage behaviour. Young people are not sufficiently monitored.

Until recently, the mix of young people living at the home was not positive, leading to difficult dynamics. Some situations have been volatile, and on one occasion, a young person was assaulted by a peer. Young people have not always felt protected by staff. Staff have failed to intervene to prevent situations escalating.

There have been several incidents when staff have been unable to de-escalate situations and the police have been called to manage incidents at the home.

Staff have not ensured that young people are clear about what is deemed to be unacceptable behaviour. Young people have said that some staff are inconsistent about the rules and boundaries in the home.

Managers have failed to monitor the quality of care provided and take appropriate steps to address poor behaviour management.

### **Leaders and managers**

Since the last inspection, the registered manager has had a period of working remotely. This was due to the impact of COVID-19. During this time, a deputy manager had on-site responsibility for the home.

The management team has been unable to ensure consistent, safe childcare practice. This is because the staff team lacks the skills and knowledge to safeguard young people. Staff struggle to work as an effective team when managers are not on shift.

The disruption in the home has had a negative impact on young people. Managers have failed to analyse incidents and monitor the quality of care. This means that they do not understand the impact of the care provided.

Independent monitoring of the home has been effective. The home's independent visitor has reported on the incidents and young people's experiences. However, managers have failed to ensure that effective action is taken to promote improvement.

The provider recognises the shortfalls. The home is more settled now and plans are under way to address the concerns raised.

## 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 positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p> <p>positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others.</p> <p>(Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(b))</p>                                                                                                                                                            | 17 January 2021 |
| <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;</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> | 17 January 2021 |

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <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.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                        |
| <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>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(f)(h))</p> | <p>17 January 2021</p> |

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 1245390

**Registered provider:** DMR Services Ltd

**Registered provider address:** DMR Services, 102 Queslett Road, Streetley, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham B74 2EZ

**Responsible individual:** Sally Neville

**Registered manager:** Keren Iqbal

## Inspector

Amanda Ellis, Social Care Inspector

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