

1246521

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a national private organisation. It provides care for up to 14 children across two houses. One house is for boys and girls aged between seven and 12 years, and the other is for girls aged from 12 to 18 years.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2019.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 9 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 June 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 20 August 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/08/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
02/01/2019	Full	Good
21/03/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
27/09/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive high-quality care from a committed and passionate staff team. Care planning is clear and well structured, with meaningful goals for children to work towards. Children's plans are individually tailored to their specific needs, and staff demonstrate a well-developed understanding of each child in their care.

Staff promote an inclusive and welcoming environment. However, for one child, a lack of information from the placing authority and poor emphasis within in-house placement planning mean that the child's cultural needs have not been sufficiently considered or met. This lack of focus has the potential to undermine the children's ability to develop a positive sense of self and of their cultural identity.

Staff use a range of tools to track children's progress. Monthly reports monitor identified targets in children's care plans. Regular individualised newsletters, sent from each child to parents and professionals, celebrate children's achievements. Children have recently led on the review of the rewards/incentives programme. This is well designed to ensure that all children feel valued and that their hard work is recognised.

There has been notable progress for children since the last visit. This includes: children moving back into mainstream education settings; children being prepared for moves into fostering; children being supported to rebuild relationships with parents, with a view to reunification; and highly vulnerable children being supported to keep themselves safe from harm.

Children are proud of their environment. They have lots of input into how their home evolves and is decorated. As a result, they really care about it. Staff provide a well-maintained and well-decorated home, which demonstrates to children that they are highly valued.

Children participate in regular consultation about their day-to-day life at the home. They demonstrate that they feel confident they are listened to and that their views are important.

Some children raise concerns verbally, rather than using the written complaints process that is in place. Staff do not always promptly respond to these verbal complaints. Consequently, these complaints are not always captured, and children do not receive clear feedback on the outcomes of any concerns or complaints that they raise. This current approach risks shutting down the child's voice for those who may not be comfortable with, or able to use, the written system.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Staff demonstrate a well-developed understanding of the risks faced by children in their care. Highly vulnerable children are successfully supported to reduce risk-taking behaviours. Parents spoke of children being given space to begin to explore trauma and they work therapeutically with staff to promote change.

Staff highly value the presence and input of the organisation's clinical team. Staff benefit from a strong therapeutic ethos that informs all areas of their day-to-day practice. This enables them to understand factors that motivate risk taking and behaviours that challenge. Staff work in partnership with clinicians to formulate effective strategies that support children to manage change.

Staff are proud of the atmosphere that has been created in the home. They focus on educating children to really understand the purpose of boundaries and structures. Staff said, 'The more time spent supporting children to understand the purpose of things that happen around the house, the more children own it and want to work within set boundaries.'

With a large group of children, some conflict inevitably occurs. However, the staff work proactively to address any concerns around bullying. Staff use incidents of conflict creatively as learning opportunities. Recent workshops around bullying have had a direct impact on improving the quality of relationships between children.

Staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities to safeguard children. They can identify their own internal safeguarding processes and demonstrate how they fit into wider external safeguarding networks.

Safeguarding is not a running agenda item at all weekly team meetings. Staff do not routinely consider different scenarios, and the desired responses to these, during staff team meetings. This means that staff may not always be encouraged, or tested, to further develop their skills and knowledge.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The organisation is planning to register the two existing homes at the site separately, with their own registered managers. This has created a challenge for the leadership team to ensure that the current registered manager maintains effective oversight of both homes in the interim. Effective use of senior leadership briefings and meetings has enabled this to happen. Communication between the two homes is good.

The registered manager is strongly committed to continuing the development of the therapeutic model of care across the homes. She supports her workforce to develop closer links with the clinical team. In doing so, she provides staff the right support to support the children they care for.

Staff describe feeling very well supported. They have a wide range of systems in place to ensure that they regularly receive feedback about their work and how they

are feeling. Supervision is regular and of high quality. Training is well maintained, despite the limitations on face-to-face training during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff have access to therapeutic parenting training. Reflective practice sessions take place with the clinical team. Leaders promote the model of care effectively and ensure that it is part of learning sessions at team meetings and development days.

Staff also value and benefit from lots of forums to talk with each other and their managers, for example during morning briefings, handovers and in-house workshops. The registered manager has helped to create a very reflective team of staff who are always willing to ask questions to further their understanding.

Relationships with external partners and parents are very strong. All feedback received is consistently positive. Staff have built confident relationships with social workers, which promotes dialogue and ensures that children's best interests are always promoted.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Due consideration should be given to the child's cognitive ability in the development and implementation of any consultation processes. In particular, the registered person should ensure that the staff recognise and respond to the children's complaints or concerns. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered person should ensure that staff hold the knowledge and skills to recognise and be alert for any signs that might indicate a child is in any way at risk of harm. The registered person should ensure that skills in safeguarding are gained and regularly refreshed. In particular, the registered person should ensure that all opportunities are utilised to explore and develop the staff's knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and the expected responses to concerns. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.12)
- The registered person should ensure that care meets each child's needs and promotes their welfare, taking into account the child's gender, religion, ethnicity, cultural and linguistic background, sexual identity, mental health, any disability, their assessed needs, previous experiences and any relevant plans. In particular, the children's plans and impact risk assessments at the point of admission should take account of their ethnicity and cultural needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.2)

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: 1246521

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Limited

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

Responsible individual: Jodie Parker

Registered manager: Abbie Troth

Inspectors

Peter Jackson, Social Care Inspector

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector

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