

1251076

Registered provider: Horizon Care and Education Group Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private organisation. It provides care for up to four children with learning disabilities.

The registered manager post is currently vacant.

Inspection date: 10 October 2023

Date of last inspection: 11 April 2023

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Outcome from the inspection

We identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection:

- Shortfalls in safeguarding practice.
- Ineffective leadership and management.
- Shortfalls in how care is organised.

Findings from the inspection

This assurance inspection was carried out because Ofsted received anonymous complaints about the home. The complaints related to continuing failures in the leadership and management of the home. Additionally, children's welfare and a lack of staff to meet children's needs were also cited as concerns.

The statutory requirements set at the home's last full inspection were not considered in detail during this visit. These requirements remain in place and will be reviewed at the home's next inspection.

There is currently no registered manager at the home. The post has been vacant since March 2023. An acting manager recently left. As a result, the home does not have stability in its leadership and management arrangements. This negatively impacts on children and staff.

The previous manager did not provide effective leadership of the home. Support for staff has been poor. Staff have felt intimidated and harassed as a result of poor and unsupportive approaches to management. Staff morale is low and staff have resigned from the organisation.

The staff are not being provided with regular reflective supervision by a supervisor or manager. This means they have not had an opportunity to share concerns about care practice or to receive professional guidance to develop their practice. As a result, leaders and managers fail to use reflective practice to assess the needs of the workforce and the quality of care that children receive.

Leaders and managers fail to ensure children live in a home that is free from avoidable hazards that may be detrimental to their health. Identified maintenance tasks, if completed, are not always effective or are not progressed in a timely manner. For example, there are still leaks in bathrooms and hazards in the garden. In one child's bedroom, there was a strong odour. As a result, the environment children live in is poor.

Current systems for monitoring the quality of care are insufficient. Monitoring systems and record-keeping are poor. Areas that require improvement are not

addressed and actions to address shortfalls are missed. External managers are now supporting the use of audits and beginning to rectify shortfalls.

Leaders and managers do not keep children's risk assessments and safety support plans under review. The accuracy of guidance on how to keep children safe is unclear and this does not provide staff with the clarity they need to keep children safe. Furthermore, staff fail to adhere to agreed risk reduction strategies. For example, staff did not know one child had left the home, as they failed to maintain the required staff-to-child ratios. This placed the child at risk of harm.

Leaders and managers do not effectively monitor and oversee the day-to-day running of the home. They do not take action to improve and develop the service because they do not use quality assurance systems effectively. External managers have now been brought in to support the home to improve. They have responded quickly to the concerns raised and have identified managers to provide management oversight and support for the home.

Leaders and managers do not implement effective care and support plans for children. Management review following any physical interventions is disorganised and lacks rigorous analysis. Children's risk assessment and behaviour support plans are not kept under review to reflect any changes to children's behaviour. This lack of management oversight prevents lessons from being learned, to develop practice and ensure that children's relevant plans are up to date and accurately reflect children's needs.

Reports provided to managers by the independent visitor have identified shortfalls in the monitoring and oversight of the quality of care. Senior managers have not ensured that effective action has been taken to address the actions detailed in these reports. This reflects the lack of required leadership and management oversight.

Feedback provided by external professional agencies and family members is not positive. Information-sharing with external agencies has been poor. Communication is not effective. This has had an impact on the effectiveness and stability of children's placements. Important information to support the health and well-being of children is not communicated.

The manager and company directors recognise and acknowledge that there are ongoing difficulties in recruiting and maintaining a fully trained staff team and recruiting staff who have the right skills and levels of experience. They are taking active steps to address this.

Senior managers, along with the supporting managers, are committed to ensuring that they have a visible presence in the home. This provides reassurance and support to the staff team and the children while the team gains the experience and skills to continue to provide a good quality of care despite the challenges.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/04/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
09/05/2022	Full	Good
22/06/2021	Full	Good
04/12/2019	Full	Good

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, The 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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live their comfortably; provide to children personal items that are appropriate for their age and understanding; and make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(iv)(vii)(viii)(ix)) This is in relation to ensuring the home provides a homely environment, meeting the needs of the children by having appropriate equipment and furniture to live comfortably, and children's rooms are personalised in line with their wishes.	22 December 2023

The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children’s home’s overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) This is in relation to ensuring children have access to and use of communal areas of the home, internally and externally.	22 December 2023
*The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(d)) This is in relation to ensuring the premises are fit for purpose and meet children’s health and well-being needs.	22 December 2023
*The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if	22 December 2023

necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)) This is in relation to ensuring that risk assessments and one-to-one sessions are regular, kept up to date and in accordance with children's care plans. Staff must have accurate and up-to-date guidance on how to keep children safe and understand their roles and responsibilities and implement agreed strategies for children's assessed needs.	
*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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(d)(e)(f)(h)) This specifically relates to the registered person implementing a system to ensure effective monitoring and oversight of the home. In particular, ensuring that improvements are made to the support for staff to receive supervision and evaluation of the quality of care and support children receive.	22 December 2023

Additionally, ensuring that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child and meet their needs.	
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*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any external agency staff meet the requirements in regulation 32(4) regarding mandatory qualifications and should consider their skills, qualifications and any induction necessary before they start work in the home. The use of agency staff should be carefully monitored and reviewed to ensure children receive continuity of care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.16)
- The registered person should ensure that contingency plans are prepared in the event of a shortfall in staffing levels. The manager should make a formal assessment of the implications for children's care, including any likely risks. This assessment should be recorded and available for inspection by Ofsted and placing authorities. This specifically relates to having a stable staff team. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.18)
- The registered manager should monitor and review the patterns and trends of turnover of staff, whether agency or directly employed, and be able to understand and, where possible, address any negative trends. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.19)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1251076

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Horizon Care and Education Group Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 12, Venture House, Prospect Business Park,
Longford Road, Cannock, Staffordshire WS11 0LG

Responsible individual: Emma Carrington

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Thirza Smith, Social Care Inspector

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