

1252120

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and provides care and accommodation for up to six children and/or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The manager registered in April 2017.

Visit dates: 6 to 7 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 15 November 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Sustained effectiveness

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

Children and young people say that staff care about them. Staff work closely with a wide range of professionals and specialist services. This has contributed to the children's and young people's overall good progress since their admission to the home. A young person commented, 'This is the best home I have ever lived in. I love the staff and I feel that we are like a real family. I would not want to change anything.'

Children and young people benefit from developing trusting relationships with staff in the home. Staff listen to the children's and young people's wishes and feelings, and act on their views where appropriate. For example, children and young people have asked to do specific activities and to go on holiday, which staff have arranged. During the COVID-19 lockdown, staff have been creative and have helped the children and young people to enjoy different activities and experiences. This has strengthened the relationships that the children and young people have with each other and staff.

Staff have ensured that family time has continued throughout the COVID-19 lockdown. Each child and young person has been provided with their own electronic device to maintain contact with the people who are important to them. A family member commented, 'The manager and the staff here are just amazing. They have supported us as a whole family. They went above and beyond to make sure we kept in contact with [Name] during lockdown. I don't know what I would do without them.'

Children and young people have made significant progress in their education. Children and young people who were admitted to the home with poor school attendance now attend school full time. During the lockdown period, staff supported the children and young people to continue with their studies. This brought routine and structure to their day, as well as supported their learning and helped them to achieve.

The safety of children

Staff support the children and young people to understand their risk-taking behaviours. Staff complete individual key-working sessions with the children and young people around relevant topics. This enables the children and young people to share their worries and concerns with a trusted adult. Children and young people say that they are well supported by staff and that they feel safe.

The manager and staff have made plans to keep children and young people safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Children and young people have been educated about the risks associated with the virus. Staff help them to understand the strategies that are in place to help keep them safe and healthy. This has helped children and young people to follow government guidance and stay healthy.

Staff respond effectively to the children's and young people's risk-taking behaviours. Missing-from-home incidents have decreased. Staff identify the link between missing-from-home incidents and the children and young people being at increased risk of exploitation. Risk assessments are updated to reflect learning from previous episodes of going missing from home. Staff identify known people and places where children and young people could be. This helps them to locate children and young people, which aids their safe return.

Children and young people respond well to rewards and incentives. Positive rewards are a preferred option to manage children's and young people's behaviour well. There are very few sanctions recorded. Recordings of sanctions used do not always detail the restorative measures considered by staff. This would help children and young people to reflect and learn from their behaviours.

Leaders and managers

The manager has an effective monitoring system in place. Children's and young people's care plans and risk assessments are kept up to date. Monthly tracking systems monitor the progress of children and young people. This has been effective at identifying shortfalls and improving care planning arrangements for children and young people, which helps them to flourish.

Overall, recordings in the children's and young people's documents are clear. However, there are some inconsistencies where staff have recorded opinions, as opposed to fact. This means that, for some of the children and young people, their records contain information that may be misleading and not helpful to them.

Staff benefit from regular supervision and attend regular team meetings. Reflective discussions help staff to plan effectively for the children and young people. This improves the overall experiences of the children and young people living in the home.

The manager has safely recruited two new members of staff. They have received an in-depth induction and relevant training to help them in their roles. Some training has been completed online due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The manager recognises the benefits of having a skilled staff team. He has plans to access face-to-face training for all staff. He aims to provide staff with interactive learning to enhance their development.

The manager and staff are well respected by a range of professionals. A professional commented, 'The manager and staff take their roles seriously, and do all they can to ensure that the young people have a good experience living in the home. They are constantly on their guard to ensure that young people are safeguarded.'

Three requirements made at the last inspection have been met. The recommendation made at the last inspection remains following this visit. An additional recommendation has been made.

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

Recommendations

- Regulation 19 (2) details sanctions that are prohibited in behaviour management. Any sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. In some cases, it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to anyone hurt by their behaviour, and the staff in the home should be skilled to support the child to understand this and carry it out. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1252120

Registered provider: Paddock House Limited

Registered provider address: B3 Kingfisher House, Team Valley, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear NE11 0JQ

Responsible individual: Susan Lincoln

Registered manager: Steven Miller

Inspector

Jacqueline Tate, Social Care Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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