

# 1259547

Registered provider: Semi-Independent House Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private provider and is registered to provide care for children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There are two registered managers, and both are suitably qualified and experienced. One manager was present throughout this inspection. The other manager is currently working as a member of staff, although remains jointly responsible for the inspection outcomes.

**Inspection dates: 21 and 22 February 2023**

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| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>requires improvement to be good</b> |
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| How well children and young people are helped and protected | requires improvement to be good |
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| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | requires improvement to be good |
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

**Date of last inspection:** 23 February 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement      |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 23/02/2022      | Full            | Good                      |
| 12/06/2019      | Full            | Good                      |
| 27/02/2019      | Interim         | Declined in effectiveness |
| 03/09/2018      | Full            | Good                      |

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good**

Children's progress and experiences are variable, particularly in relation to their education. Staff know the children well and provide nurturing care. Children have developed some positive and trusting relationships with staff. As a result, children will actively seek support from staff. Children have developed strategies for managing difficult feelings and emotions. This is helping them to become more settled.

The physical environment is homely, but some outstanding maintenance work impacts on the overall presentation of the home. For example, areas of water damage in a child's bedroom and the lounge have not yet been redecorated. A bathroom has mould above the shower, which is unpleasant and could be a hazard to health. The manager and team have redecorated some areas of the home. However, this is an onerous task for the manager and staff when they are also providing care and support to the children at the same time.

Staff are not consistently following a child's assessment and plan in relation to monitoring and recording their food and fluid intake. This prevents clear oversight from health professionals who have requested this information. Not all staff have a suitable first-aid qualification. This means, at times, there is not a qualified first aider in the home.

Children know how to make complaints. However, a complaint made by a child to their social worker was not appropriately managed or investigated. The manager failed to take any action in response to the complaint or in sharing the details with senior management. There was a lack of challenge by the manager in how this complaint was addressed. As a result, the child did not receive an outcome or information about how the complaint had been managed. This means that children's views were not considered, and this has the potential to allow poor practice or safeguarding concerns to go unchallenged. This could place children at risk of harm.

Overall, the children have suitable education plans, although children's attendance and attainment are inconsistent. One child, who recently left the home, did not have suitable or structured education provision. This led to the child disengaging from education. The manager worked with external professionals to try and secure an appropriate education provision. The manager also tried to provide the child with alternative informal education and physical activities. A child who recently moved into the home has maintained their original school placement. This provides consistency and stability for the child, which is positive for them. Another child, who had previously not been in a mainstream school, is now accessing a local education provision. The manager is working closely with other professionals to ensure that the child is supported.

Children have access to a range of clubs and activities in the community. Children are enrolled at the local leisure centre. They have access to a range of classes and the swimming pool. One child attends a local drama group and has participated in productions.

Children are helped to stay in touch with people who are important to them. As a result, for some children, family relationships have improved. They are having regular family time which is positive for all.

Children's health needs are well met, particularly around their emotional health and well-being. The manager works with external professionals to access additional support for children. Concerns around self-injurious behaviours have been responded to swiftly. As a result, children are safer and more able to talk about things that are concerning them.

One child had an unplanned ending to their time at the home as the manager felt they were unable to continue to keep the child and others safe. The transition was positive, and the child enjoyed a farewell tea with staff. A child who has recently moved into the home has settled well and says that they are happy.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

The children's risk assessments are confusing and contradict information in other plans. Staff do not consistently follow risk management strategies. On one occasion, this led to a child going missing. Staff did not follow the agreed plan and the child was left unsupervised after leaving the home. This had the potential to place the child at risk of harm.

There have been several allegations about staff. In most cases, these have been managed appropriately. Relevant safeguarding professionals have been informed and have given guidance to the manager. On one occasion, a safeguarding concern raised by an external person was not responded to in a timely way. The manager began their own investigation prior to informing a senior manager or external safeguarding professionals. This has the potential to hinder any external investigation.

On another occasion, concerns about a staff member's practice were raised and the manager took appropriate action. The manager was not involved in the investigation as this was carried out by the human resources department, and they were not informed of the outcome. The staff member transferred to another home without the manager's knowledge. The manager is not satisfied that their concerns were adequately addressed by senior managers.

Staff manage worrying incidents involving children well. They have used de-escalation techniques to prevent any serious escalations in behaviour. On one occasion, staff used a physical restraint to prevent a physical altercation between children. This was appropriate action to prevent harm. However, the staff member

was not trained to use physical intervention. The management oversight and evaluation failed to reflect this concern or if any lessons were learned around risk management of children's relationships.

The manager has a good relationship with the local police. They have been supportive to the home in managing incidents of concern around inappropriate use of social media. When concerns have arisen, the manager has implemented plans and risk assessments to ensure that children are kept safe. Targeted work with children is helping them to understand how to keep themselves safe online.

Recruitment of new staff has not consistently followed safer recruitment practices. For example, one member of staff had a significant gap in their employment history that had not been considered. For another staff member, the reason for leaving employment in a similar role had not been explored. This has the potential to allow unsuitable adults to work with children in the home.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

There has been a lack of senior leadership and practical support for the manager during a difficult period. The manager is regularly working several shifts a week to cover shortfalls in the rota caused by staffing shortages and difficulties in recruiting new staff. This has significantly impacted on the manager's ability to carry out all their management tasks and provide effective oversight. There has also been an impact on the manager's learning and development of the management role.

The manager is child-centred and committed to their role. They have a good relationship with the children and an understanding of their needs. The manager mentors and supports staff to develop their skills and knowledge. Staff receive regular supervision. However, not all staff, including the manager, have had an annual appraisal. This is a missed opportunity in supporting staff to progress and develop their learning and reflection on care practice.

Staff have access to a range of training, both online and face to face. The manager has scheduled additional workshops for staff with the psychotherapist to develop their understanding of children's emotional health needs. Not all staff have completed mandatory training or refresher training in key areas such as safeguarding and child exploitation.

The manager works well with external professionals and is part of a multi-disciplinary team. Professionals spoken to by the inspector are positive about the care and commitment to the children provided by the manager and staff. They praise the communication, which they describe as 'very good'. The manager keeps external professionals updated with any concerns.

There has been a delay in the manager receiving up-to-date care plans for the children. The home's care plans are not concise and contain some information that is

no longer relevant or is contradictory to information in other plans. This prevents staff from having a clear understanding of children's current needs.

## 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     |
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| <p>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c))</p> <p>This relates to the management of complaints made by children about the home.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 1 April 2023 |
| <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>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies;</p> <p>that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm;</p> <p>that the premises used for the purpose of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each</p> | 1 April 2023 |

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| <p>child from avoidable hazards to the child's health.<br/>(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(vii)(b)(d))</p> <p>In particular, this relates to ensuring that: staff follow risk assessments in place; risk assessments accurately record all risks and action to be taken; allegations or complaints about the home are appropriately managed; essential home maintenance is addressed.</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 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>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for 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>demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—</p> <p>feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.<br/>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(d)(f)(g)(ii)(h))</p> <p>This relates to leadership and management oversight of the home. In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that: quality assurance processes are in place; staff receive all</p> | <p>1 April 2023</p> |

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| relevant training; sufficient staff are employed to enable effective management oversight; complaints are managed effectively.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |              |
| <p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children's home;</p> <p>if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(d))</p> <p>In particular, this relates to obtaining a full employment history and verification, as far as practicable, for any person who has left a position that involves working with children or vulnerable adults.</p> | 1 April 2023 |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (3))</p> <p>In particular, this relates to any complaints made about the home from internal or external sources.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 1 April 2023 |

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised every year. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- The registered person should ensure that at least one person on duty has a suitable first-aid qualification. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.13)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff are trained in the principles of restraint and any restraint techniques used in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.57)

## **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:** 1259547

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Semi-Independent House Limited

**Registered provider address:** 51 Ploverly, Peterborough PE4 6HZ

**Responsible individual:** Amanda Charlie

**Registered manager:** Rebecca Bushell and Hayley Couldridge

## Inspector

Sarah Orriss, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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