

1263120

Apex Children's Services Limited

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home. It provides care for four children.

The current manager has been registered with Ofsted since 1 November 2018.

Inspection date: 24 September 2021

This monitoring visit

We last visited this setting on 27 and 28 July 2021 when a full inspection took place. The inspector identified a number of significant shortfalls in safeguarding practice and procedures in the home, and poor leadership and management. Two compliance notices were issued under regulation 12 (the protection of children standard) and regulation 13 (the leadership and management standard).

The focus of this visit was to monitor and review the actions taken by the provider to meet the two compliance notices that were issued following the last inspection. There were four children living in the home at the time of the monitoring visit.

The registered manager has resigned her position at the other one of the company's homes she was also managing. This has enabled her to be in this home full time. The changes in the management of the home have ensured that there are mechanisms in place for consistently monitoring staff practice. The registered manager has now implemented appropriate monitoring and review systems to make sure that there are continuous improvements in the quality of care provided for children.

The registered manager has taken action to improve communication systems for the staff team. She arranged team meetings to discuss staff practice and reinforce roles and responsibilities for all team members, including their responsibilities in communicating all relevant information. Communication has improved and staff are aware of all the relevant information for each child when they come on shift.

The staff are now more consistent in their approach and report that they feel the changes implemented have developed them as a consistent, stable staff team. Children also confirmed that staff 'all say the same thing, and no means no'. Overall, the home is now providing care in line with its statement of purpose.

The compliance notices also required the provider to ensure that managers and staff receive training to be able to safely care for children. The registered manager has taken some steps to address this and has undertaken an audit of staff training. She has identified and arranged training across the team. This includes knife crime, exploitation, recording and reporting and safeguarding. This will ensure that the staff responsible for children have the skills and experience to keep children safe.

The protection of children compliance notice required the provider to ensure that children's individual risk assessments identify all known risks. The registered manager has ensured that individual risk assessments are in place which identify children's known risks. Most risk assessments contain clear actions for staff to follow to reduce identified risks, but some are not consistently recorded in a comprehensive way. This was discussed with the registered manager, who recognised and addressed this shortfall.

Staff have had training on risk assessments and now consistently sign to indicate that they have read each child's risk assessment. Consequently, staff spoken to during the monitoring visit understood children's known risks and the actions that they are expected to take to reduce these risks. Because of this, staff are taking more effective action to reduce the risk of harm to children. Since the last inspection several safeguarding incidents, have been managed appropriately by staff.

Locks on internal doors were visible during the visit. The registered manager reported that these had been removed but then replaced due to a safeguarding incident. The registered manager understood that restrictions cannot be placed on children's liberties without a court-directed order. The registered manager assured inspectors that they plan to remove the internal locks.

Staff have spent individual time with each child after safeguarding concerns have been identified. These included concerns around knife possession and smoking in bedrooms. Records are detailed and indicate that discussions have taken place with children about risks to their health and potential criminalisation. Children confirmed that staff spend time with them and said staff 'help them to understand how to keep themselves safe'.

The provider has demonstrated at this visit that it has taken the necessary steps to ensure that the compliance notices issued under regulations 12 and 13 are met. Ofsted does not plan to take any further enforcement action. A further unannounced inspection will take place to continue to monitor the quality of care provided. The requirements will also be considered at this visit.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/07/2021	Full	Inadequate
01/05/2019	Full	Good
19/02/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/04/2018	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, 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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs. (Regulation 5(a)(b)) This is in relation to ensuring that timely follow-up action is taken with the placing authority in response to safeguarding incidents, in order to secure any relevant services to protect children.	19 September 2021
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— take part in activities, and attend any appointments, for the purpose of meeting the child's health and well-being needs. (Regulation 10 (1)(a) (2)(a)(iii)) This specifically relates to exploring ways to help children to take part in activities and attend health appointments.	19 September 2021
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and	19 September 2021

positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(v)) This specifically relates to reinforcing the boundaries and expectations around children's behaviour and revising strategies where appropriate.	
The registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected; children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is kept under review and, if necessary, revised. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(iii)) This specifically relates to reviewing the arrangements for locking the kitchen and bathroom areas on the ground floor at night.	19 September 2021
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received in the children's home. In particular the registered person must ensure that— medicine which is prescribed for the child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and no other child; and a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child.	19 September 2021

(Regulation 23 (1) (2)(b)(c))	
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c)) This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that staff date and sign all records relating to children's care.	19 September 2021
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (4)(a))	19 September 2021

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure staff are supported to understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording, in relation to improving the quality of recording of documents, including support sessions completed with children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1263120

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Apex Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: 6 Tower Quays, Tower Road, Birkenhead, Cheshire CH41 1BP

Responsible individual: Barry Henry

Registered manager: Jennifer Savage

Inspector

Michelle Edge, Social Care Inspection Manager

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