

1269215

Registered provider: Hexagon Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private company. It provides care and accommodation for up to four children and young people with social and emotional difficulties.

The home is registered for single-gender occupancy only (female).

A new manager has been appointed and is registered with Ofsted.

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

Inspection dates: 26 to 27 May 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

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

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 14 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/01/2020	Full	Good
22/08/2019	Full	Inadequate
06/03/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
08/01/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have positive relationships with the staff team, and because of this, children can talk to staff and are helped to make better decisions about their lives. Children feel listened to and have made no complaints. The staff team implements clear daily boundaries for children and works consistently to agreed objectives set out in children's care plans.

School attendance has significantly increased for all children living in the home. The staff team works closely with children's schools to continue to improve their attendance and celebrate children's achievements. The staff team is proactive in helping children to secure further education courses and plans positive transitions to their chosen colleges.

Children have regular family time. Parents are positive about the progress children are making while living in the home. Children are encouraged by the staff team to rebuild their relationships with their parents. Children also spend time with their friends in the community. This is carefully risk assessed by the staff team, and their friends' parents are liaised with to agree safe arrangements.

There are no current risks of children misusing substances, and the staff team is vigilant in monitoring this should it become a concern. Children are supported to reduce their smoking through a smoking-reduction plan. An in-house therapist works with the staff team to help children develop coping strategies, and children engage in weekly individual and group therapy sessions.

Matching risk assessments demonstrate that consideration is given to each child's needs and risks, and to the impact of each other living together, prior to them moving in. Children's transitions from the home are mostly planned, and the staff team remains in contact with children after they have moved. Where children's placements have unexpectedly had to come to an end, children have been placed in a short-term crisis placement within the company, until a more suitable placement has been found.

Staff lock the doors to communal areas as part of a daily evening routine. However, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific risk factors identified in a regularly reviewed risk assessment. There are currently no risks identified that would make this action permissible.

The hallway and staircase areas look worn and require decorating. The manager has obtained quotes for this work to be completed in the next few weeks. The kitchen has also been measured for a refit, but the installation has had to be delayed. These tasks should be made a priority to promote a homely environment for the children living there.

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

Children feel safe and say that they make safer choices since living at the home. Children's social workers told the inspector that the staff team understands children's risks and any triggers to their risk-taking behaviour. The staff team works effectively with other agencies to reduce risks for children, such as the police and the child sexual exploitation team.

Overall, there has been a reduction in risks for children, specifically relating to missing-from-home incidents. Records demonstrate that staff know how to respond when children try to abscond and that they understand the procedures that should be followed to return children safely.

Restraint is rarely used in the home. The manager's evaluation of restraint records reflects that the measures used are necessary to keep children safe and considers any factors that have contributed to the escalation of the incident. Risk reduction plans are comprehensive and provide staff with clear strategies to follow. As a result, the use of police support is minimal and only accessed when children put themselves or others in high-risk situations.

Staff have a clear understanding of allegation management, the purpose of the whistleblowing policy to keep children safe and how to escalate their concerns if required. Allegations and historical disclosures made by children are managed well, and the appropriate professionals are consulted with.

Staff monitor children's use of the internet and social media by completing regular checks. Consequently, children are learning to be honest about their activity online. Immediate action is taken to safeguard children if they misuse the internet or their mobile phone. Staff engage children in creative direct work sessions to promote children's self-esteem and to educate them about exploitation and internet safety.

All health and safety checks are up to date. However, where buzzers are used on children's bedroom doors and external doors to monitor their whereabouts during the night, signed consent from parents or social workers has not been obtained. In addition to this, the use of the monitoring devices is not included in children's risk

assessments or care plans, and there is no evidence that the suitability of the monitoring is reviewed regularly.

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

The manager knows the staff team and children well. She has worked in the home since it was registered, and she is a positive role model. The manager acknowledges that she is still in the process of learning her role. She has attended an aspiring leadership programme to support her own professional development.

The staff team feels supported by the manager and say that she welcomes staff's suggestions about effective ways of working with children. Structured induction programmes for probationary staff evidence that they are met with regularly to review their progress. However, practice-related supervisions with permanent staff are not taking place at regular timescales, consistent with the company's policy. This is essential, so that staff have clear guidance and support from the management team.

Mandatory training is mostly up to date, with staff attending refresher courses in the next few weeks. The manager has not accessed training specific to the needs and historical risks of children, for example substance misuse or equality and diversity training. This should be prioritised, so staff have the skills to support children.

There has been a significant delay in the manager notifying a child's placing authority about an external allegation made to the police and to the designated officer relating to a member of staff working at the home. The manager should ensure that any safeguarding concerns are reported to the child's social worker or senior professional within the placing authority immediately. That said, the child was not placed at risk due to the delay.

The independent visitor rarely obtains children's feedback about their care. The manager should support the independent visitor to regularly obtain feedback from everyone involved in the children's care, including staff, children's families and social workers. This will ensure that the independent visitor is able to provide full scrutiny of the service provided in the home.

The manager completes fortnightly monitoring and audits of all the records in the home. The quality of care report prepared by the manager provides a detailed and reflective evaluation of the service, progress made by children and the home's strengths and weaknesses. However, the report does not include feedback that the manager has obtained from children, staff working in the home, social workers and family to evidence a full evaluation of the quality of care provided in the home.

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
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)) Specifically, where electronic buzzers are used on children's bedroom doors and external doors, there should be written consent from the person with parental responsibility. The use of the buzzers should be written in children's care plans and their suitability reviewed regularly.	09 July 2021
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) Specifically, all staff should receive regular practice-related supervision in line with the company's policies and procedures.	09 July 2021
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(c)) Specifically, the registered manager must ensure that children's social workers, their team manager or a duty social worker are notified immediately when safeguarding allegations are raised relating to a staff member working in the home.	09 July 2021

When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives, and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (2)(a)) Specifically, the registered manager must make suitable arrangements to support the independent person to seek regular feedback from children, their families, staff working at the home and children’s social workers about the quality of care provided in the home.	09 July 2021
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children’s homes are nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children; they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children’s homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than ‘institutional’ impression. Specifically, the hallways require decorating and the kitchen refurbishing to promote a homely environment for the children living there. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that, just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child’s needs. Any decisions to limit a child’s access to any area of the home, and any modifications to the environment of the home, must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child’s welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child’s needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home. Specifically, the registered manager should ensure that staff are provided with training specific to children’s needs such as substance misuse and equality and diversity within appropriate timescales. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. Specifically, the manager should ensure the feedback they obtain from children, staff, social workers and families is included in the review of quality of care report, to demonstrate they have considered a full evaluation of the service provided. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 55, paragraph 10.24)

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: 1269215

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hexagon Care Services Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 1 Tustin Court, Riversway, Preston, Lancashire PR2 2YQ

Responsible individual: Jeanette Swift

Registered manager: Rachel Horrobin

Inspector

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector

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