

1271998

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is one of several homes operated by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children and young people who may have emotional or behavioural needs and/or a learning disability.

The current manager is new in post. An application to become the registered manager has been submitted to Ofsted, however this has not been processed yet due to supporting documents being missing. This is being addressed.

Visit dates: 9 to 10 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 15 October 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Good

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 are happy living at the home and are progressing well. They have received good care and support during the pandemic. Care planning is appropriately focused and as a result prepares children well for their next move.

Staff know the children and young people well. The children and young people have positive relationships with both staff and each other. This has helped to establish a calm and considered approach to the national guidance and how this can be implemented within the home.

Children and young people have enjoyed spending this time with their family and friends. This has been managed well, with clear assessment in place to manage the risk of COVID-19.

Children and young people access education and activities. This has helped them to keep active during lockdown. Children and young people talk fondly about this. This has had a positive impact on their emotional health and well-being.

Staff support children and young people well. Children and young people have also been able to access additional support if they need it. For example, they have continued to receive support by the home's assistant psychologist. This has supported the children and young people to understand and manage their emotions and feelings.

Parents and professionals speak well of the home and of the progress that children and young people make. One social worker said that the young person placed at the home had made really good progress and had engaged well in the therapeutic programme. They went on to say that the therapy has positively impacted on the young person's emotional well-being and his ability to regulate his emotions and manage change.

The safety of children

Children and young people are settled and seem very content. Staff have a good understanding of needs and risks. They also have the necessary strategies in place to support children and young people to keep safe. Children and young people have a good insight into their own needs and risks, and staff encourage them to say what will help them to feel happy and safe.

Staff do not always practice in a safe way. There has been an investigation regarding the conduct of a number of staff that has compromised the safety of children. While the investigation was carried out satisfactorily,, managers did not inform Ofsted of

the investigation. The provider has taken appropriate action to prevent this from happening again.

The number of children and young people who go missing from the home is low as are the number of episodes of missing. When children or young people do go missing, staff are proactive. The risk assessments and plans are clear, and staff ensure that they act swiftly to locate the child or young person and encourage them to come home. Interviews with children when they return home have been a challenge over recent months. When local authorities have struggled to complete these due to Covid restrictions, staff have completed these interviews to promote the safety of children.

Behaviour is managed well and there have been minimal incidents. When incidents happen, staff have diffused the situation well. Staff have supported children and young people to explore their emotions and develop ways to avoid these in the future. For example, developing their communication skills to help explore their wishes and feelings.

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Leaders and managers

Requirements from the monitoring visit on 7 May 2020 have been met.

Management oversight and quality assurance is not consistent across all areas of practice. A recommendation was raised at the monitoring visit to the home in May but this has not been met. As a result of continued shortfalls identified at this assurance visit, a requirement has been raised to address this breach of regulation. As a result of not effectively assuring the quality of care, managers were not aware of the standards of practice and the professional conduct of some of the staff, resulting in an internal investigation.

Managers do not always receive the support they need to manage the home effectively. For example, the supervision of managers is inconsistent. Also, it is not always clear who is providing senior management oversight of the home.

Ofsted has not received regulation 44 reports since April 2020. The inspector was informed that the reports had been completed but not sent to Ofsted. The inspector reviewed the reports as part of the assurance visit. The reports are informative and positive. They show that the home has supported children, young people and staff well during lockdown.

The arrangements to ensure that the home continues to develop are not sufficiently robust. They lack insight and analysis. Furthermore, the plans to continue to develop the home are unclear.

The provider recognises the challenges of not having consistent management oversight of the home and has recently appointed an experienced manager.

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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 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— 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; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; 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. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b))	23/10/2020

The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b)(2)(a)(b)(d)(h))	23/10/2020
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. A notification made under this regulation must include details of— the matter; the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter and must be made or confirmed in writing. (Regulation 40 (4)(e)(5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))	23/10/2020
The registered person must use reasonable endeavours to ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to—	23/10/2020

HMCI.

(Regulation 44 (1)(7)(a)(b))

Recommendations

- Regulation 45 sets out requirements for the registered person to have a system in place which allows them to monitor the matters set out in the regulation at least once every six months. The registered person should undertake a review that focuses on the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strength and possible weakness in the home's care, which will be captured in the written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next six months of delivery within the home and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2).

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1271998

Registered provider: Care 4 Children Residential Services Limited

Registered provider address: Care 4 Children, 1 Stuart Road, Bredbury Park Industrial Estate, Bredbury, Stockport SK6 2SR

Responsible individual: Stephanie Hewitt

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Lisa Gregoire-Parker, Social Care Inspector

Rob Assall-Marsden, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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