

1275500

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children, including children with learning disabilities.

The registered manager post has been vacant since October 2019.

Visit dates: 13 to 14 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 19 September 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

Staff deliver a well-developed and coherent therapeutic model of care. They are enabled to provide highly individualised support for young people with complex needs.

Young people and staff have strong, trusting relationships. Young people say they feel well supported by staff.

Despite the restrictions placed on the home through the COVID-19 lockdown period, staff have continued to deliver a consistent experience of care for young people. Education is well maintained. Staff facilitate children spending time with their families, using virtual technology when face-to-face contact has not been possible.

Staff continue to deliver a varied programme of activities for young people. Young people have been able to follow their interests, with a particular focus on personal fitness and well-being in recent months.

Young people feel confident to express their views and they feel included in decisions made about their day-to-day care and support.

Young people benefit from a well-maintained and homely environment. They are encouraged to add personal touches to make it their home.

One parent said, 'I really don't know where we would be without them. The team there have done an amazing job during this tricky time.' Parents describe substantial progress for young people. They also compliment the staff's ability to keep them informed about the lives of their children and keep them involved in decisions about their care.

The safety of children

Staff recognise the risks faced by children in the home. They have a deep and reflective understanding of the specific needs of young people.

Staff's safeguarding practice is generally good. There was an occasion in which a summer activity was not effectively risk assessed. This led to children being exposed to potential risk by being given to access a mobile phone without regard to the risks that this posed to them. However, staff's reflection and learning from this is clear. The senior leadership have also improved oversight and monitoring of risk management processes.

Staff benefit from skilled clinical support that enables them to work in a positive and affirming way. Young people, whose starting points were characterised by high levels of disruptive and aggressive behaviour, have learned to manage their emotions. Young people live in a calm and safe home. Staff manage the behaviours of young people safely, without the need to use physical interventions.

In spite of the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the delivery of face-to-face training, staff have maintained their competency through the use of online training resources. They display good knowledge of their own role in safeguarding young people and recognise their place in the wider network of safeguarding support for young people in their care.

Leaders and managers

Senior leaders have faced a series of obstacles in registering a manager for the home. There has been no registered manager in place since October 2019. Some of the circumstances leading to this have been out of the control of the provider. However, management turnover has also, in part, been affected by one interim manager lacking the skills and experience needed for the role. This lack of stable management arrangements has had an impact on the consistency of care for children.

Senior leaders have been able to maintain good oversight of the management functions at the home. They display a bold and ambitious vision for the home. This centres around a framework for the continuous professional development of staff. They are investing resources in upskilling the whole team and gaining accreditation for their work with children.

Senior leaders display a commitment to developing broad and effective teams around young people. They have a team of clinicians attached to the home and also benefit from good relationships with specialist external services, such as forensic child and adolescent mental health services.

Leaders have supported the development of a staff team with high morale and strong loyalty to the young people and their employer. Staff describe good support structures and enjoy regular high-quality supervision.

Requirements from the previous inspection have been met, leading to improvements in the quality of care for children. These include the introduction of more personalised activity programmes, more coherent and focussed therapeutic support for children and a sharper focus on continuous professional development for staff.

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 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. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)) In particular, to ensure all activities are adequately risk assessed and consider all known contributory risk factors for young people at the home.	31/12/2020
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and the registered provider— is an organisation or a partnership; does not satisfy regulation 28; is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home. If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of the name of the person so appointed; and the date on which the appointment takes effect. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)(2)(a)(b))	31/12/2020
A person may only manage a children's home if— the person is of integrity and good character; having regard to the size of the home, its statement of purpose, and the number and needs (including any needs arising from any disability) of the children the person has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills to manage the home effectively and lead the care of children. (Regulation 28 (1)(a)(b)(i)) In particular, to ensure that any person proposed to register as manager for the home has the requisite skills and experience.	31/12/2020

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1275500

Registered provider: Headstart Residential Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Aequitas, Unit 1, Swanwood Park, Gun Hill,
Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 0LL

Responsible individual: Nicola Dann

Registered manager: Post Vacant

Inspector

Peter Jackson, Social Care Inspector

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