

1277584

Registered provider: De Novo Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home provides care for up to three children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The manager has been in post since the beginning of January 2021, and registered with Ofsted in April 2021.

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

We last visited this setting on 23 to 24 February 2021, to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 September 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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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	Inadequate
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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: 7 August 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/08/2019	Full	Good
29/01/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Children's experiences are mixed. Due to poor matching decisions by leaders and managers and inexperienced staff, the home was unsettled, and children's needs could not be met. Five children have subsequently left, some with unplanned endings.

The managers and the staff have reflected on this difficult period. At the time of this inspection, managers were starting to make some progress with putting in place action plans. This is beginning to improve the quality of care provided for the children.

The current mix of children is working well. Staff are implementing learning after a period of training and reflection. Relationships between children and the staff are positive. Handovers are thorough. Communication between professionals, carers and the children is effective. Improvements to the referral and matching process are improving children's experiences.

The environment is welcoming. Fresh flowers and books create a homely atmosphere. The children have pet fish. Bedrooms are personalised. Staff paint bright murals on the walls. Framed photographs of the children are on display, including children who have very recently come to live in the home. Attention to detail creates a family feel. Children benefit from visual records of children's lives. This helps children to feel valued and have a record of their childhoods.

Family members are invited into the home. Staff work with children and their parents to try and strengthen and rebuild relationships. Children have private tennis coaching on site. Staff use their own individual talents to enrich the experiences for children. For example, a member of staff grows vegetables in the home's garden. The children and staff harvest food from the allotment and use this to cook together. This means that children experience everyday activities enjoyed by other children.

Education is valued by the staff. Some children have not attended education for long periods. Regular serious incidents in the home do not create an environment in which children can learn. More recently, opportunities for children to benefit from their education are improving. One child has remained at their previous school. This provides continuity. Another child is being sensitively supported to start a new school. There is good communication between the home and educational settings. A structured timetable of activities is available for all children. Everyone is clear about daily plans. This helps children to get the most from their education.

Some children have engaged in behaviours that are detrimental to their health and well-being. Children are influenced by other children living in the home. For example, one child who did not smoke or go missing before coming to live in the

home was encouraged to join in these behaviours by another child. Recent changes in the mix of children living in the home have reduced some of these risks.

Children's views are listened to. Interactions between staff and children are relaxed and nurturing. Children are encouraged to tell staff about things that they are not happy about, and children's views are acted upon. This helps to ensure that children receive sensitive care from adults who understand their wishes and feelings.

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

The current mix of children is working well. These children are being cared for safely. The staff team is more settled and there has been learning from previous incidents.

Previously, staff lacked confidence to intervene when situations escalated. Some incidents were repeated before learning was effective. A full review of the home's security arrangements was completed, and recommendations are being implemented. Staff and managers have improved how they manage children's difficult behaviours. There is now greater understanding among staff about the need to intervene sooner to protect children.

Frequent changes in staffing had resulted in poor continuity of care and inconsistent boundaries. At that time, children and staff were unclear about the arrangements for children who smoke and some staff lacked confidence in implementing children's plans regarding the handing-in of lighters. At the time of this inspection, the situation has improved. Managers have reviewed incidents and applied learning. There is now improved clarity among staff about how to reduce risks when children smoke.

Previously, ineffective monitoring of children's internet activity left children at risk. Following a serious incident, managers completed a review of internet safety arrangements. New measures are now in place and agreed prior to a child coming to live in the home. Staff are gaining confidence and monitoring the children's internet use more closely. Direct work is completed with all children to help them to use social media safely.

Arrangements for responding to children who go missing are improving. Staff understand how to respond if a child goes missing and keep in touch with children when they are not where they should be. Children are warmly welcomed back into the home and return home interviews are followed up. Positive relationships between staff and children and improved matching mean that missing-from-home incidents are reducing in number.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Ineffective management oversight and failure to learn swiftly from incidents resulted in children who previously lived in this home not being kept safe. In addition, difficulties with recruitment led to inexperienced staff being employed to care for children. At times, children were out of the staff's control, and several serious incidents occurred. Learning from these incidents was too slow and consequently additional incidents happened.

During a particularly challenging period, when there were many serious incidents in the home, the manager failed to notify Ofsted of an allegation made by a child against a member of staff. The designated officer was informed of the incident which was investigated. However, a failure to notify Ofsted of serious incidents prevents the regulator from having up-to-date information about the running of the home.

Recruitment processes are not good enough. Managers do not review the employment history or references of agency staff. Gaps in employment are not explored thoroughly. The manager has insufficient information to be sure that the people coming to work in the home do not present a risk to children.

Staff are positive about the current leadership. Reflective supervision and team meetings are beginning to make things better. A well-being practitioner visits the home to offer emotional and practical support. This helps the staff and children to build resilience, and is strengthening relationships.

Managers and staff have begun a period of consolidation. Staff are allocated areas of individual responsibility. This is helping to provide much-needed structure and accountability among individual 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)) In particular, ensure that children's risk assessments are reviewed and followed. Ensure that these risk assessments clearly set out the steps staff need to take to protect children from harm.	1 November 2021
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and	1 November 2021

promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(e)(h)) In particular, ensure that staff have the necessary skills and experience to meet children’s individual needs. In addition, learning from incidents should be put in place quickly to avoid similar incidents being repeated.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that children are suitably matched to the skills and experience of staff, to prevent sudden and unplanned placement endings.	1 November 2021
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children’s safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children’s home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that—	1 November 2021

the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; and 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)(b) (3)(b)(d)) In particular, ensure that the manager has full information when employing agency staff.	
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))	1 November 2021

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: 1277584

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: De Novo Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Bank Green House, Fox Lane, Holmesfield,
Dronfield, Derbyshire S18 7WG

Responsible individual: Steed Harris

Registered manager: Kirsty Walker

Inspector

Angela Weston, Social Care Inspector

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