

1278421

Registered provider: DMR Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It provides care for up to four children aged between 11 and 17 who may have had adverse childhood experiences.

The registered manager left in September 2022 and a new manager has been in day-to-day charge since. He has not applied to register and is currently the registered manager for another of the organisation's children's homes. He is overseeing both homes.

Inspection dates: 2 to 5 May 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	Inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
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Date of last inspection: 9 August 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

An assurance visit took place on 11 and 12 October 2022 and serious and widespread concerns were identified. The compliance notice relating to Regulation 13, the leadership and management standard, issued following the last full inspection had not been met. It was reissued for a third time.

A monitoring visit took place on 30 November 2022 to review compliance with the steps in the notice and found that it was met.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/08/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
14/06/2022	Full	Inadequate
09/06/2021	Full	Good
11/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

There have been serious and widespread failings that have impacted on the experiences and progress of children. At the time of the inspection, there were four children living in the home.

Staff do not have the skills to de-escalate incidents in the home effectively, and this has had a detrimental effect on children living in the home. One child who has recently moved into the home has been causing damage to his own bedroom and to other communal areas of the home. Another child has started to copy this behaviour, and staff have not always been able to de-escalate or divert incidents effectively. Managers told inspectors that staff have been unable to safely manage the relationship between the two children, and they have raised this with local authorities. One child said she has been disturbed by noisy incidents, and this has impacted on her sleep. She made a complaint to the manager but has not received any formal response. Additionally, damage in the home has not been repaired quickly. During the inspection, repairs were being made to holes made in the walls.

Children's emotional health needs are not being responded to with the urgency and tenacity they require by staff and managers. One child who has expressed low mood and suicidal thoughts has been taken to see their doctor and a referral made to the local mental health support service. However, there is no written plan on how to support the child or to detail strategies that have been suggested by the doctor. The child's records do not reflect that an appointment took place. One child who has wrapped wires around their neck has not received any support from staff to help them understand their feelings or how they would like to be helped if they feel upset.

Children take part in activities with staff that they enjoy and regularly attend clubs, such as gymnastics, dance and martial arts. When age-appropriate, children also play out locally with friends. There have been some incidents of inappropriate behaviour being displayed by children in the community. When this happens, although staff take some action, this is not always consistent and effective to help children to understand how their behaviour can affect themselves and other people, and to reduce the risk of incidents happening again.

Two children, who are siblings, have lived at this home for a number of years. Maintaining and supporting their relationship has been a strength of the home. Children are supported to see the people who are important to them.

Children have good school attendance, and the staff support children and work with other professionals if there are any difficulties at school.

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

Safeguarding arrangements in the home are inadequate. At the last full inspection, the manager had identified that it was common practice for a child to have the personal mobile phone numbers of some staff. Despite the manager asking staff to stop this practice, insufficient follow-up action was taken by managers with staff, and the practice continued. Managers have failed to undertake a thorough investigation to understand this practice as it relates to all staff involved.

A member of staff continued to communicate with a child via phone and social media over several months, and there are concerns that this member of staff has been grooming a child living at the home. The member of staff is currently suspended and an internal investigation is underway. During the inspection, the responsible individual shared information of a serious nature that she had found during the investigation. This had not been shared with the local authority social worker or the local authority designated officer (LADO) and, as a result, other agencies had not implemented child protection procedures and had been prevented from taking action to ensure the safety of children. This failing put children at risk of harm. Inspectors ensured that the information was shared with the relevant agencies during the inspection.

Furthermore, leaders and managers had failed to ensure that all relevant information regarding concerns about a member of staff were shared as part of initial safeguarding referrals to the LADO and local authority. This prevented them from making informed decisions.

On one occasion, a child told staff he had been receiving threats at school. Although the manager contacted the school, no follow-up action was taken, and the child's placing authority was not informed. When another child disclosed historical abuse, this information was not shared with the child's placing authority.

Measures in place to help children use the internet safely are weak. Parental controls are in place. However, these are inadequate and have not been reviewed and improved promptly to protect children from the risk of harm. On different occasions, children have managed to receive and share sexually inappropriate material with each other and other children outside of the home. Work to support children with understanding the dangers of their actions is lacking. In addition, while there is an agreed plan for staff to check children's phones daily, this is not being done. Staff have not received adequate training to help them to understand how they can help to keep children safe online, and some staff have not received any training.

There is a poor safeguarding culture at the home that compromises children's safety and welfare. An inspector witnessed inappropriate banter between the manager and a member of staff. In staff supervision records, there is reference to female members of staff being referred to in derogatory language by children and staff. A

member of staff confirmed this. This use of language and a lack of challenge is poor and does not promote children's welfare.

Restraint is used only when absolutely necessary. Incidents of restraint are not all recorded well. Some records do not include debriefs for staff and children and do not have any management oversight. This reduces the opportunity for learning from incidents and reflecting on practice.

Staff recruitment checks are not always thorough. For one member of staff who has a previous conviction, this had not been thoroughly considered or explored in a risk assessment before they were employed. When references for one staff member highlighted concerns, there was no attempt to fully understand the issues during the verification process. Furthermore, the verification of references takes place with an administrative member of staff that limits the opportunity to consider any information shared through a safeguarding lens.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The current management arrangements are not effective in ensuring that children are safely cared for. The manager is responsible for this home and is the registered manager for another setting, which reduces the time he has to maintain day-to-day oversight. The responsible individual has only recently taken over the role permanently, moving from another role in the organisation. The home is sufficiently staffed, but some senior members of staff have recently left. As a result, the majority of staffing is provided by permanently employed bank staff.

The majority of staff have not received any supervision. When supervision has taken place for some staff, this is infrequent and does not contain any reflection on practice. When staff failures in practice have been identified by the manager, there is no record of this being addressed in their supervision.

Not all staff have received training in safeguarding or managing challenging behaviours. Some newer staff have received very little training before working in the home. These shortfalls have led to a lack of direction for staff and a lack of consistency for children.

Internal and external monitoring is weak. Records for children are poorly maintained. Some serious incidents have not been identified as such or shared with the relevant agencies, including Ofsted. Recommendations made by the independent person have repeatedly not been met. Additionally, the independent person has not always raised concerns sufficiently when they have been identified. A quality of care report has not been submitted to Ofsted.

The provider worked with local authorities to implement immediate safety plans for children before the inspection concluded. As a result of the findings at the inspection, Ofsted issued a notice restricting accommodation and a compliance notice in relation to Regulation 12, the protection of children standard.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; provide to children personal items that are appropriate for their age and understanding; and ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(vii)(viii)(c)) In particular, that any damage in the home is repaired quickly and the decoration in home is maintained to a high standard.	18 June 2023
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 positive responses to other children and adults.	18 June 2023

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)) In particular, that staff help children understand unacceptable behaviour.	
*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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; 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; and	18 June 2023

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)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) In particular, that there are improvements to the safeguarding culture in the home, and all aspects of the compliance notice are met.	
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 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 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; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(e)(f)(h))	18 June 2023

In particular, that the staff team are trained, skilled and experienced to meet the needs of children and keep them safe. Additionally, that managers and leaders review monitoring systems to improve oversight of staff practice and records.	
A responsible individual must— have the capacity, experience and skills to supervise the management of the home, or the homes, in respect of which the responsible individual is nominated. (Regulation 26 (7)(b)) This requirement is unmet from the last visit and is restated. In particular, that the responsible individual revisits training in relation to safeguarding children.	18 June 2023
A person may only manage a children's home if— 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)(b)(i)) The refers to ensuring that the responsible person reviews the current day-to-day management arrangements.	18 June 2023
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).	18 June 2023

The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of 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)(a)(b)(c)(d)) In particular, that information arising from staff references or Disclosure and Barring Service information is thoroughly reviewed by someone with safeguarding knowledge and experience.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)(c))	18 June 2023
The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	18 June 2023

The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or 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; must be made or confirmed in writing. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e) (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b)) In particular, that leaders and manager review the threshold for 'seriousness' in relation to current guidance.	18 June 2023
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. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of	18 June 2023

care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report").

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) (3) (4)(a))

* This requirement is subject to a compliance notice.

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: 1278421

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: DMR Services Ltd

Registered provider address: D M R Services, 102 Queslett Road, Streetley, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham B74 2EZ

Responsible individual: Joanna Mountford

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Jessica Forshaw, Social Care Inspector
Jackie Line, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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