

1280210

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care for up to two young people aged between eight and 17 years who have social and emotional difficulties.

The current manager took up post on 3 February 2020 and was registered with Ofsted on 29 September 2020. The manager is experienced and has an appropriate qualification.

At the current time, only one young person is living in the home.

Visit dates: 5 to 6 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 9 March 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Improved effectiveness

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

Despite the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, staff have continued to work with mental health professionals to ensure that the young person's emotional health needs continue to be met. Staff have encouraged the young person to cook healthy meals and, during the pandemic, have together enjoyed going shopping and playing musical instruments. These shared activities help to build relationships between the young person and the staff.

The young person is supported to achieve academic success. Staff frequently talk to the young person about her aspirations and have supported her in looking into attending university to do a degree in psychology. This encouragement has given her increased confidence to succeed in life.

The young person is in the final stages of preparing to move into semi-independent accommodation. Staff have been instrumental in helping the young person to be ready for this move. This includes helping the young person to find a part-time job, to develop budgeting skills and to be confident to travel independently. As a result, the young person has developed independent living skills and is confident that she can care for herself in the future.

The communal areas of the home are well furnished and decorated, and the kitchen and lounge are pleasant places where the young person can sit with staff to eat a meal and watch television. However, an en-suite bathroom has damage to the bath. The door to the bathroom is boarded up. The damage occurred in July 2020 and has not been quickly repaired. The impact on the young person has been limited because she can use another bathroom and has recently moved to a bedroom with an en suite facility. The delay in completing the necessary repairs is put down to the impact of COVID-19.

Despite all the hard work by the staff to prepare the young person for her move, she has reacted to an update on her move by dismantling her bed and packing her possessions. As a result, she is sleeping on a mattress on the floor surrounded by boxes containing her possessions. Staff have not used their trusting relationship with her to encourage her to reassemble her bed and to take her items out of boxes.

The safety of children

Staff have access to detailed behaviour management plans that give them clear advice on how to manage the young person's challenging behaviours. As a result, incidents are rare, and there have been no incidents of behaviours requiring physical intervention, or of the young person going missing from the home, since the last inspection.

However, risk assessments do not always tell staff about how to keep the young person safe around the home. For example, staff are not clear how to support the young person when she lights candles in her bathroom. Furthermore, staff do not always promptly update risk assessments when emerging risks occur. For instance, the young person was splashed with hot oil while cooking, on five occasions, before staff acted. This lack of clear guidance means that staff are not well informed on the necessary steps to reduce risk.

When recruiting new staff, managers do not ensure that the information required to meet regulation is available. Managers do not ask staff questions when there is insufficient information about staff's education history and do not verify personal references from friends and professional colleagues. This means that unsuitable staff can potentially work with vulnerable children.

Leaders and managers

Feedback from key professionals is positive. The young person's placement has been stable in the home, and the young person's social worker told the inspector that the young person had made significant progress during her time at the home.

Staff face-to-face training has been impacted by the national lockdown and the restrictions around COVID-19. Despite these restrictions, staff have continued to access online training, including safeguarding training. However, five out of eight staff have not received training in autistic spectrum disorder. This is despite the young person being significantly affected by this condition. This gap in training has resulted in a gap in some staff's knowledge in understanding how this condition impacts on the young person's everyday life.

Staff say the home is well managed and that they benefit from regular supervision and an annual appraisal. However, managers do not always encourage staff to reflect on their practice. The manager sets development goals for staff that are not ambitious. This limits the capacity of managers and staff to improve the quality of care for the young person.

The manager has a workforce development plan. However, the plan does not detail the core training for new staff and the agreed timescales.

Monitoring by managers is not effective. Two of the three requirements made at the last inspection have been reissued. Managers are still not monitoring key aspects of the young person's care, such as the effectiveness of key-work sessions and sanctions. This means that the manager is missing opportunities to evaluate staff practice and improve the quality of care.

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; and take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(vi))	09/11/2020
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and 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; and 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)(h))	09/11/2020
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only—	09/11/2020

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— 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)(d))	
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Recommendations

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.). However, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should:
 - detail the necessary management and staffing structure, (including any staff commissioned to provide health and education), the experience and qualifications of staff currently working within the staffing structure and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the home's Statement of Purpose
 - detail the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training (such as safeguarding, health and safety and mandatory qualifications)
 - detail the process for managing and improving poor performance
 - detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice (see regulation 33 (4) (b)) and keep appropriate records for staff in the home.

The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff – including the home's manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1280210

Registered provider: First Blue Healthcare Limited

Registered provider address: Eagles Nest, Dunston Business Village, Dunston ST18 9AB

Responsible individual: Kristie Dimaro

Registered manager: Winston Damerum

Inspector

Karen Gillingwater, Social Care Inspector

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