

2484443

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is registered for up to three children. It provides care for children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home offers medium- or long-term placements.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in August 2020.

Visit dates: 9 to 10 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 14 January 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be 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 said that they did not like the lockdown period and felt frustrated. This frustration resulted in an increase in significant incidents in the home. During these challenging times, and due to the government restrictions, repairs to the home could not take place. As a result, children have been living in an environment that is not as homely or welcoming as it could be. In response, the manager has compiled a maintenance and refurbishment plan which is due to be implemented.

The manager and team recognised that during the lockdown period maintaining boundaries and managing the tensions between the children was problematic. During this period, incidents of bullying took place, and significant damage was caused to the environment. In response, the manager has introduced individualised daily routines and behaviour management targets and strategies, for children and staff. Since their implementation, incidents have reduced, and the children are now saying that they feel safe and happy living here.

The team has not been successful at meeting all the children's health needs. One child who refuses to attend healthcare appointments is not receiving the specialist advice and support that he needs. The lack of healthcare intervention for this child has the potential to have a long-term negative effect on his health and well-being.

Children's educational needs are met and promoted well. During the lockdown period good use was made of online resources. An education provider spoke highly of how well staff at the home communicates, attend meetings and implements strategies that the school recommends.

Children's personal interests are promoted well and relationships between staff and children have developed. A social worker who contributed to this assurance visit confirmed this, and said: 'The staff have the skills to motivate the children to engage in activities of their choice. Children have enjoyed fishing trips and walks in the country.' A member of staff talked about the positive impact of shared activities and said: 'On one occasion [child's name] and I walked for five miles. We talked about a range of subjects. I really enjoyed the quality time we spent together and felt like our relationship strengthened as a result of this.'

Children are supported to maintain their relationships with family members and friends. During the lockdown period good use was made of a range of electronic devices, helping children to maintain contact with family members and friends. When restrictions relaxed, staff supported children to see their family and friends face to face.

The safety of children

Safeguarding concerns are recognised and responded to appropriately. Good relationships have been established and are maintained with safeguarding agencies. Records relating to the one safeguarding concern reported since the last inspection detail what actions have been taken and the outcome.

During the pandemic, there has been an increase in significant incidents. Staff

have reported incidents of bullying, missing-from-home events and on occasions police intervention. During and following this unsettled period, staff made excellent use of resources such as firesetter intervention programmes, online training sessions, quizzes and one-to-one discussion to help children to recognise the impact of difficult behaviours on themselves and others.

Risk assessments and behaviour management plans are in place and are regularly reviewed. New targets and incentives have been introduced. To date, these strategies have been effective at helping to manage children's behaviour more positively. Documents now provide staff with clear instructions about how to respond to behavioural incidents.

The manager and staff have prioritised children's safety and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have implemented government guidelines effectively and maintained robust hygiene routines.

Leaders and managers

Since the last inspection, a new manager has been appointed and successfully registered with Ofsted. The staff interviewed during this visit spoke confidently about the support they receive from the manager. They said he is supportive and approachable.

In recent months, team meetings and one-to-one supervisions have focused on developing the team's resilience and skills. The manager has facilitated these meetings well, providing the team with a safe and supportive forum to reflect on their practice and explore what lessons have been learned as a result of lockdown. Consequently, team morale has improved, and the staff said that they have learned a lot from each other and are working well as a team.

Since the last inspection, four staff have left the home and four new staff have been recruited. All staff have completed an induction programme and refresher training courses. One member of staff gave an example of how he now uses his learning in practice. Despite these training and learning opportunities, not all staff have received specialist training that would help them to understand and respond to all the children's current needs, for example, diet and nutrition, and separation and loss.

The children speak highly of the manager and identified him as one of their favourite members of staff. Professionals and a parent who contributed their views to this assurance visit commented positively about the manager and his child-centred approach. They said communication and the sharing of information is good.

The directors and manager take effective action when recommendations are made by the independent visitor. The independent visitor's reports are detailed, and provide useful challenge for the home to help to drive improvement. To further improve the quality of care provided to children the directors have introduced enhanced monitoring visits.

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
10. The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans; understand the child's health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child's health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding; take part in activities, and attend any appointments, for the purpose of meeting the child's health and well-being needs; and understand and develop skills to promote the child's well-being. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c) and (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	16/11/2020
11. 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.	16/11/2020

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;

help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;

communicate to each child expectations about the child’s behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child’s age and understanding;

help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child’s age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful;

help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship;

strive to gain each child’s respect and trust;

understand how children’s previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;

are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same;

de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children;

understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and

have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them.

(Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c)

(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(ix)(x)(xi)(xii) and (xiii))

Recommendations

- To be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, children's home's 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). In particular, ensure the home's development and refurbishment plan is implemented without delay.
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11). In particular, consider providing updated specialist training in diet and nutrition, and separation and loss.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2484443

Registered provider: Impact For Change Ltd

Registered provider address: Canns Down Press, Beaford, Winkleigh, Devon EX19 8LZ

Responsible individual: Mark Parker

Registered manager: Russell Chapman

Inspector

Sharron Escott, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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