

2495375

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a national charity and provides a therapeutic model of care for up to nine children who have social and emotional difficulties. One of the nine beds available is in a training flat to support children with their transition to independent living. The home accepts both planned and emergency admissions. It is a commissioned service for children living in the London Borough of Wandsworth.

At the time of the inspection, five children were living at the home.

The home registered with Ofsted in November 2018. The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2021.

Inspection date: 29 March 2023

Date of last inspection: 25 April 2022

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

The care of children

The home provides a warm and welcoming environment. Staff are attuned to children's individual needs and work hard to meet these. The care provided is personalised and consistent, so that children are able to make good progress relative to their starting points. This includes education, where effective links are made with the professional network to support children back into formal education.

Children speak positively about staff and their experience of living in the home. Feedback is gathered in a range of ways, including through children's meetings and key-work sessions. Children's voices are heard and used well to inform planning. Staff show ingenuity and go to considerable lengths to identify ways to engage children and capture their imagination. In doing this, there is a focus on individual growth and supporting children to achieve things they might otherwise not have thought they could.

Children's individual health needs are identified and met. Staff recognise that some children require additional support to attend routine appointments. Where this is the case, staff take a step-by-step approach to building confidence and overcoming fears so that children are able to attend appointments and agree to treatment if required.

As the home is contracted to one local authority, the manager and staff have had the opportunity to develop strong and effective partnerships with a wide range of professionals across local health services. These are used to good effect to ensure that children have access to appropriate services when needed.

The safety of children

Risks are identified and understood. The quality of relationships that staff develop with children and the careful approach taken to care planning enable staff to identify and respond to new and emerging risks.

The manager works assertively with safeguarding partners to ensure that prompt action is taken when safeguarding issues are identified. There is a culture of learning in the home. The manager, team leaders and residential staff are reflective and work together well to identify how safeguarding practice can be strengthened.

Case recording, assessments and plans are detailed and accurate. Staff are provided with clear guidance and instruction. Plans are regularly reviewed so that they remain current, and their impact is monitored through audit and discussion.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

The manager responded quickly to the requirements made at the last inspection, and these are now all met.

Children are cared for by staff who are motivated and enjoy their work. The manager and two team leaders schedule regular supervision sessions and undertake performance appraisals. The manager is accessible and maximises the time that she spends with children. The team reflects continually on its practice and the impact that it has on children's individual progress.

The home is large and well resourced. The children have their own gym, access to a computer and education suite. Work is underway to further enhance the sensory room. Children's bedrooms are personalised, with welcome packs available for children that arrive in an emergency. The garden provides a pleasant outdoor space where children can play basketball or sit and relax.

Staff vacancies have continued to be hard to fill. Currently, both deputy leader posts are vacant, as are a number of other residential posts. Recruitment has been ongoing, but success has been limited. In the short-term, this has been managed well so that consistency of care has not been affected. Senior managers from the wider organisation have provided additional management cover where required to assist the registered manager. In the longer-term, the resilience of the staff team will be challenged if these posts are not filled.

The home provides care for up to nine children, including emergency, short and long-term placements. In any year, up to 50 children could come to live at the home. There are plans to review the purpose of the home with the commissioning local authority. It is important that this includes consideration of the appropriateness of accommodating younger children for extended periods alongside older children who may only stay in the home for very short periods.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/04/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
12/05/2021	Full	Good
12/12/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
25/06/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home has enough suitably trained staff (including someone in a management role) on duty to meet the assessed needs of all children in the home and that those staff are able to respond to emergency placements, where accepted. In particular, this relates to the need to recruit for the two vacant deputy manager posts. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 51, paragraph 10.1)
- The registered person should ensure that emergency admissions are not taken unless the home's statement of purpose and its capacity and support systems mean that it has the capability to care for children admitted at very short notice while continuing to offer high-quality care to children already living in the home. In particular, this relates to the planned service review with the commissioning local authority and the need to focus on how the needs of younger children placed for longer-term or extended periods, can be met alongside those of the large number of older children who may stay in the home for shorter periods of time. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.6)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2495375

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Registered provider address: 1 Putney High Street, London, Wandsworth
SW15 1SZ

Responsible individual: Philip Townsend

Registered manager: Tara McCrory

Inspector

Martin Davis, Social Care Inspector

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