

2495967

Registered provider: Harmony Childcare Residential Homes Limited

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company and is registered to provide care for up to three children with social and emotional difficulties.

The inspector was aware during this inspection that child protection allegations were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the allegations were considered (where appropriate) alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Inspection date: 16 February 2023

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken to investigate information received by Ofsted which raised concerns about safeguarding practice and the leadership and management of the home.

The home has experienced a period of instability since the last inspection. There are ongoing investigations into concerns about staff practice. Concerns include insufficient support for staff and children, inappropriate comments made to children, allegations against staff, and blurred professional boundaries between some staff and children. The outcome of these investigations remains unknown.

One child told the inspector that they did not feel listened to and that she had to be misbehave on purpose because that was the only way to be seen and heard. Another child stated that she does not always feel safe in the home. Leaders and managers have failed to respond to the views and needs of children in their care. This does not demonstrate that children's views, wishes, feelings and experiences are considered and responded to. This leaves children vulnerable to harm.

During the inspection, children and staff expressed that one child has been treated differently to another. Staff stated that appropriate professional boundaries were not always being maintained, and one child expressed that they were treated differently and received a higher level of sanctions. This has created conflict in the home and has had an impact on the relationships between staff and children.

Staff are unable to manage children's behaviours. Dynamics between three children living in the home have been difficult and incidents in the home have escalated in recent weeks. Children have been up through the night and all staying in the one room. Staff have been unable to implement clear boundaries for children and de-escalate incidents. This has compromised the children's welfare.

There is a lack of effective strategies to protect and support children. Children have been vaping inside and outside of the home, including inside staff vehicles. Staff do not challenge this effectively or explore where the vapes are being obtained from.

Staff did not follow missing from home protocols when the three children went missing from home together. This resulted in delays in the correct action being taken to keep children safe.

Staff are not equipped with the skills to safeguard children. When a child made an allegation against a member of staff, internal safeguarding procedures were not followed. As a result, the child was left in a situation that made her feel unsafe. In addition, this failing does not help children to trust that the adults caring for them will take action to keep them safe.

When risks to children are identified, information is not always shared with safeguarding agencies. This prevents a multi-agency approach to managing and reducing risk.

Leaders and managers have not taken steps to ensure that staff working in the home have gone through robust safer recruitment checks. Recruitment information highlights concerns about one individual's practice with children and professional conduct. This has not been adequately explored and risk assessed.

Management oversight of the operation of the home is weak. Managers lack an understanding of the shortfalls in the quality of care and staff practice. Consequently, prompt and effective action is not taken when children are not receiving the care that they need. This limits children's progress and effects the experiences they have in the home. For example, one child who was making some good progress in education is no longer attending school. There is a lack of educational structure and routines. This impacts on the daily experiences of the child and limits their progress in education.

The missing from home incidents for one child have increased because she feels unsettled in the home. In addition, the child has not received the specialist support that she needs to support her to process her complex experiences.

Managers' and staff's practice is not in line with the home's statement of purpose or ethos. Consequently, children are not receiving therapeutically informed care or living in a therapeutic environment. The home has sustained some damage as a result of incidents, and a large padlock securing a cupboard in the utility area detracts from the otherwise homely environment.

Record-keeping is chaotic and confusing. Staff are not always able to access the documents they need. Daily logs maintained in the home are disorganised and staff are not keeping a record of sanctions that are being used. This reduces the opportunity for reflection and oversight and impacts on the consistency of care for children.

Following this inspection, Ofsted has issued a notice restricting accommodation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/12/2022	Full	Good
30/08/2022	Full	Inadequate
08/09/2021	Full	Outstanding
02/10/2019	Full	Good

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; 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; 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 are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii))	16 March 2023
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.	16 March 2023

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; 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(f)) In particular, that managers identify and address conflicts in the staff team promptly and appropriately so that this does not impact on the care of children. In addition, the manager should ensure that care is delivered therapeutically in line with ethos set out on the homes statement of purpose.	
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child;	16 March 2023

regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv))	
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— 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; 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)(d))	16 March 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. 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;	16 March 2023

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; that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ix)(b)) In particular, ensure that staff build positive relationships with children and understand professional boundaries. In addition, ensure that staff have the skills to understand and respond to children's behaviours.	
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(viii)) In particular, the manager should ensure that children are provided with daily structure and routines that support their educational progress when they are not attending school.	16 March 2023
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. The registered person must ensure that—	16 March 2023

within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—

details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure;

a description of the measure and its duration;

details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;

the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure;

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 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3)(a)(ii)(iv)(v)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))

In particular, managers must ensure that all measures of control and discipline are recorded. In addition, the manager should review the measure and its effectiveness.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that, in line with their individual health plans and the ethos of the home, children are offered advice, support and guidance on health and well-being to enhance and supplement that provided by their school through personal, social and health education. Specifically, ensure that children with a history of neglect are supported to understand personal hygiene and puberty. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.18)
- The registered person should ensure that maintenance is carried out promptly, and the need for a large padlock on a kitchen cupboard is reviewed. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

- The registered person should ensure that where children have specific health needs or conditions, they are supported to manage these subject to their age and understanding. When a child needs additional health or well-being support, staff should work with the child's placing authority to enable proper and immediate access to any specialist medical, psychological or psychiatric support required, and challenge them through regulation 5 - engaging with the wider system, to ensure that children's needs are met, if this doesn't happen. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.10)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2495967

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Harmony Childcare Residential Homes Limited

Registered provider address: c/o Easyflow Ltd, 38e Vanguard Way, Battlefield Enterprise Park, Shrewsbury SY1 3TG

Responsible individual: Lyndsay Miller

Registered manager: Priya Birring

Inspector

Natasha Skinner, Social Care Inspector

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