

2502918

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This privately owned residential home is registered to support two children aged eight to 18 years who may have social, emotional, mental health or learning needs. The registered manager left the home on 28 May 2020.

Visit dates: 19 to 20 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 12 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

From April 2020 to September 2020 two children were living at the home. Another child became resident in October 2020 and is currently the only child living at the home.

During the lockdown period the children and staff experienced an unsettled and uncertain time. The children struggled with the limited activities and reduced structure. Being kept indoors created further tensions for the children's relationships. At the same time, the manager and deputy manager left with little notice, at the end of May and June 2020 respectively. The responsible individual then left a month later.

The newly appointed responsible individual was, however, able to overcome the challenges of instability. The staff created activities to de-escalate challenging behaviours. These included developing arts and crafts projects, organising theme nights and spending quality time with each child. The staff worked closely with the school to replicate a similar timetable to follow at the home. This provided the children with practical opportunities to grow and learn in a structured way.

The senior manager empowered the children to make successful and planned transitions. One young person turned 18 and moved into semi-independent accommodation. The other child moved to a sister home nearby. For both children, the staff continued to support them as they settled into their new homes. This enabled the children to be confident and secure in their future plans.

At the time of the assurance visit, one child had just moved into the home. Due to their complex risks and needs, the staff provide high levels of support. They balance this support with encouraging the child to take part in making decisions about their care. This means that the child's experience is personalised, and their rights are upheld.

The quality of care is good. This view is shared by parents and external professionals. Staff have travelled considerable distances and provided supervised visits for children to maintain their relationships with family and friends. This enables children to keep a positive sense of their identity.

The home environment needs some improvement. The den area requires redecorating and cleaning. Some of the hallway paintwork is scuffed in places and the garden spaces are overgrown.

The safety of children

Staff have managed several serious incidents safely. Due to the challenge of lockdown and the complexity of the children's needs, there had been an increase in the number of incidents. The responsible individual reviewed the triggers for these incidents and identified strategies for prevention. He made plans for an increase in

staff support for one child and a supported move to the nearby sister home. The responsible individual has thus supported the child to be safer.

The staff's caring approach underpins their ability to keep children safe. The staff are working hard to build a positive relationship with the child who is currently living at the home. The staff show patience, a consistent response and genuine warmth. The staff talk to the child, identifying the positive choices that the child can make and reflect together on negative incidents. This encourages the child to learn from these incidents and gives them positive role models.

Risk management plans do not include full details of the children's individual risks or when specific strategies work best. For example, a recent impact risk assessment and healthcare plan did not contain details of the child's recent self-harming behaviours. The staff are not, therefore, fully prepared to manage these behaviours.

Although training has continued during the pandemic, not all staff have been able to undertake specialist training to meet the child's individual needs. This means that some of the staff do not fully understand the child's behaviours and know how to manage individual risks.

Leaders and managers

The responsible individual has met the requirement made at the last inspection. He has prioritised stabilising the management of the home. A new manager has been appointed and is now in post.

Staff supervision is not consistently recorded. Therefore, the manager's ability to use supervision to track staff's actions and measure their performance is limited.

The staff do not always record information clearly or appropriately. The previous manager used inappropriate terminology to refer to a child in a supervision record. Some records, such as team meeting notes, are not always legible. The manager is aware of these issues and is making changes to records and how they are kept.

Staff have responded well to the changes that the manager has made. They feel supported by her and are motivated to continue with the improvement plans.

The manager is using internal and external feedback from the children, staff and professionals to assess the effectiveness of the home. External feedback, however, has not been considered in the location risk assessment. The assessment is not responsive to the children's previous incidents in the community. The manager has not fully explored how the local data can inform the staff's practice. This reduces its effectiveness as a safeguarding tool.

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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(iii))	31/12/2020

Recommendations

- Provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)
In particular, redecorate the den, keep the communal areas to a good standard and maintain the upkeep of the garden spaces.
- The registered person is responsible for ensuring a record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- The registered person is responsible for ensuring that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

In particular, ensure that records held at the home do not use derogatory terminology and are legible.

- The registered person should review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2502918

Registered provider: Protea Care Limited

Registered provider address: 317 Horn Lane, London W3 0BU

Responsible individual: Bon Rogers

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Leemya McKeown, Social Care Inspector

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