

2503143

Registered provider: Solace Care Partners Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run children's home provides care for up to four children who experience social and/or emotional difficulties.

The home registered with Ofsted in October 2019.

The registered manager post is vacant. The home was temporarily closed at the time of inspection and no children were living at the home. The leaders and managers plan to reopen the home imminently.

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 October 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 24 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/01/2023	Full	Good
11/01/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
13/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children, who previously lived at the home, made variable progress while living there. The frequency of children going missing from the home or engaging in anti-social or harmful behaviours had been a cause for concern. The managers of the home worked closely with the children's placing authorities to explore ways of reducing these risks.

Staff's care practice and their behaviour management strategies were not sufficiently effective.

Staff supported children to attend school. For example, staff would support children in practical ways to get to school in the morning. However, the children were still not attending school regularly. Some children were excluded from school due to their behaviour.

Staff supported children to engage in extra-curricular activities such as ice skating, bowling and football. These activities were positive for children as it helped them to develop relationships with staff and they were able to follow new interests or re-establish past hobbies and interests.

Children's health needs were understood and met. Children were referred to specialist health services, such as sexual health clinics and substance misuse services, when required. Staff supported children to attend these appointments.

Children were not always given the opportunity to share their views, wishes and feelings about the home. Some meetings involving all the children led to discussions about children's personal issues, such as their challenging behaviours and the consequences they had been given. Such discussions were unhelpful in a meeting where other children were present.

When children or other people have made a complaint, records do not demonstrate what actions were taken, if any, and whether the outcome was shared with the complainant.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Children's risk assessments do not identify the level of risk or the strategies that staff need to use to manage and reduce risks for children. Not all children had behaviour management plans for staff to follow. When children had a behaviour management plan, these were poorly written. This impaired staff's ability to manage behaviour and risks effectively. For example, on several occasions, a child went missing from the home without staff realising, despite there being an increased ratio

of staff providing support to the child. On other occasions, children were able to bring illegal substances into the home.

Staff approached any direct work with children inconsistently. Consequently, needs and risks were responded to inconsistently and children received mixed messages.

Staff did not consistently follow the missing-from-home protocols, including reporting to police in a timely manner and regularly contacting children to check on their welfare and encourage their safe return home. Missing-from-home records are inadequate and do not clearly outline when children have been missing, what actions were taken and when they returned home. However, the current manager has been making an effort to address staff practice so that they follow missing-from-home protocols correctly and record information clearly.

When incidents occur in the home, staff do not have the skills to support children effectively. They gave inappropriate advice to children, which did not take into account children's experiences at the home. Furthermore, there was inconsistency in how incidents were recorded. These records do not provide information about how children were helped and supported.

The local area risk assessment is out of date. It does not equip leaders, managers and staff to understand the current risks in the vicinity of the home and to respond effectively.

Safe recruitment checks are not robust. References are not verified and some employment gaps have not been scrutinised. This does not safeguard children and potentially places them at risk from people employed to care for them.

Feedback from previous children's social workers is concerning. They say that staff practice was unprofessional and that children were not always supported with care and compassion.

When the risks to a child were deemed to be high, managers appropriately engaged with the child's local authority and safeguarding agencies to review their care plans to ensure that they had adequate support to meet their needs.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Leadership and management arrangements have been inconsistent. This has led to a lack of management oversight of the service. It has also resulted in inconsistent practice regarding the care and support provided to children.

Leaders and managers recognise this and they have identified areas for improvement. The home was closed for a short period to enable them to reflect on how to improve the service, upskill the staff and improve children's experiences. They have recruited an experienced staff team, with plans to focus on staff practice and staff development going forward.

Staff do not receive regular and effective supervision. This means that managers do not have good oversight of staff practice, and they have not always been able to identify the staff's development needs. This has impacted on staff practice and the help and support they are able to provide to children.

Team meetings do not take place regularly and, when they do take place, they are not recorded well or in a timely manner.

Previously, managers did not have up-to-date care plans from children's placing authorities. Without these plans, it was difficult to ensure the right level of care and support was in place for each child. Furthermore, when considering new children moving into the home, the needs of these children and those already living at the home were not fully considered, particularly the impact they would have on one another.

Managers did not always consider whether the staff team had the skills to meet the needs of the children. This caused disruption and instability for a number of children.

Mandatory training for staff is out of date. Furthermore, a number of staff have not completed training to meet the specific needs of children. This includes training in areas such as risk from association with gangs, child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation. This impacts on the staff's ability to help and protect children.

The quality of records, including children's plans, risk assessments, restraint records and records of direct work needs to be strengthened. The lack of clarity in children's case records does not enable readers to easily understand children's needs, experiences and risks. This demonstrates a lack of management oversight. These records are important for children and represent a part of their life history, which they are entitled to view as adults.

Staff understand whistle-blowing policies and procedures. They know what to do if they witness malpractice.

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, The 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 children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— 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; regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care; ensure that each child— is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support and services that the child receives. (Regulation 7 (1)(c) (2)(a)(ii)(iv)(b)(i)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that children's meetings are held regularly, and ascertain children's views, wishes and feelings about the home.	10 November 2023
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	10 November 2023

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; 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; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(b)(d)) Leaders and managers must ensure that risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated, are robust and correctly identify risk levels and the strategies to help staff to manage and reduce children's individual risks. Leaders and managers must ensure that missing-from-home protocols are followed, and that they have clear oversight of missing-from-home incidents. They must also ensure that missing-from-home records include all relevant information.	
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46 (1) (2))	10 November 2023
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and	10 November 2023

have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home’s statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that they have a copy of all children’s local authority care plans. When considering new children moving into the home, leaders and managers must fully consider the needs of children already living there alongside those of the children moving in, as well as whether the staff have the skills to meet the needs of all children in their care.	
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— 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; 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)(f)) In particular, leaders and managers must monitor and improve the quality of children’s records, including records of key-work sessions, restraints, risk assessments and incidents.	10 November 2023

Leaders and managers must ensure that staff receive the appropriate support and training to provide a good quality of care to children and ensure that their needs are met well. Leaders and managers must ensure that team meetings are held regularly and focus on staff development and child-related practice.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that all staff, including managers, receive regular and effective supervision and that appraisals are carried out annually.	10 November 2023
A person may only manage a children's home if— the person is of integrity and good character; having regard to the size of the home, its statement of purpose, and the number and needs (including any needs arising from any disability) of the children— the person has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills to manage the home effectively and lead the care of children; and the person is physically and mentally fit to manage the home; and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the person in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 28 (1)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that safer recruitment checks are completed for all staff and ensure that all discrepancies in employment history and references are explored and verified.	10 November 2023

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2503143

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Solace Care Partners Limited

Registered provider address: Solace Care Partners Limited, Unit 2A, 420 Eastern Avenue, Ilford IG2 6NQ

Responsible individual: Umer Ahmed

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Amena Begum, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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