

2510201

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is one of a number operated by a private provider. It provides care and accommodation for up to two children who may have emotional and social difficulties.

The manager has managed the home since it was registered in May 2019. He completed the registration process with Ofsted as part of the home's registration.

Visit dates: 7 to 8 September 2020

Previous inspection date: Not previously inspected

Previous inspection judgement: Not previously inspected

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 identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Children benefit from living in a homely environment. It is a small family home which children are able to personalise with their own belongings. This helps them feel at ease here and they value their home.

Children have good relationships with staff and managers. The staff team is stable, enabling children to develop meaningful relationships. Staff ensure consistent rules and boundaries and encourage children to make the right choices. This helps children feel safe and encourages positive behaviour.

Children receive good-quality, individualised care. Staff actively encourage children's interests and their participation in activities in the community, such as playing in a rugby team. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on these, children are starting to get involved in such activities once again.

Staff support children to keep in touch with their families. Family contact has continued in various formats during lockdown, to ensure that these important relationships are maintained.

Children have not always moved on from the home in a planned way. One child left following a serious incident in the home. However, he had made good progress during his time here and successfully completed national qualifications. He has also kept in touch with the manager, illustrating the significance of the relationships formed while he was living here.

Neither of the current residents are attending school. While home education is promoted, and staff are skilled at using everyday situations as a means of encouraging children's problem-solving skills, this is not a suitable solution in the long term. The registered manager is currently working with both local authorities to resolve this, as a matter of urgency.

The safety of children

Safeguarding practice in the home is largely good. Children's risk assessments alert staff to their high-risk behaviours and the best strategy for managing these. These documents are regularly updated so that staff are aware of escalating behaviours.

There is a clear reduction in children's risk-taking behaviours following their admission to the home. Children rarely go missing from the home, as they are learning to make better choices and actually want to spend time here. Similarly, staff rarely need to engage in physical interventions as they are able to de-escalate the majority of incidents. One child commented in the annual Ofsted survey, 'I feel free when I'm here because I feel safe.'

While children's risks are understood, and children are learning to share their feelings with staff and get support, there has on occasion been a delay in taking

decisive action to ensure a child's immediate safety. While a dynamic risk assessment was completed following an incident of self-injurious behaviour, the child was left with the means to cause further injury until the following day, when a room search was completed, and items removed. This delay could have resulted in a further incident.

Staff have all received training in safeguarding. The suspension of face-to-face training during the pandemic has had limited impact, due to the stability of the staff team. The manager has sourced some online training for specific issues, such as sexually harmful behaviour, as an interim measure, until staff can attend a taught course later this month. This ensures staff have the skills they need to keep children safe.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager is appropriately qualified and experienced. He also has the support of a deputy manager. They have both worked here since the home opened in May 2019. Together they demonstrate a commitment to improving outcomes for children and in developing their staff team. The stability of the staff team reflects their success.

Staff are positive about working in the home and feel well supported. They receive regular supervision and report that managers champion their career progression. There has been no need for relief staff to work in the home during the pandemic, although staff have been supported to self-isolate when needed.

Good use is made of both internal and external monitoring. Independent visits have been completed remotely during the pandemic. These have included telephone discussions with children and staff, to ensure that the home is settled. A recent change of provider has also helped improve the level of scrutiny provided. The manager welcomes this independent oversight, as he is keen to improve.

External monitoring reports have highlighted a small number of serious incidents that have not been notified to Ofsted. However, despite this being highlighted in the report, no subsequent notification has been received. This prevents Ofsted from reviewing the incident and assessing whether the necessary actions have been taken.

The manager has established relationships with other safeguarding bodies and has challenged local authority decision making effectively, when he has not agreed that this is in the best interest of the child. An advocate has been sourced for one child, who is unhappy with his current care plan. Managers are keenly aware of their responsibilities in this respect.

The home has not had a previous inspection, but this visit would indicate that a good start has been made to the operation of the home.

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 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 take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(vi))	12/10/2020
Notification of a serious event The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— - a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; - an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; - there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; - a child protection enquiry involving a child is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or - there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4))	12/10/2020

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2510201

Registered provider: Outbound Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Unit 2, Metropolitan Business Park, Preston New Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY3 9LT

Responsible individual: Paul Cotton

Registered manager: Samuel Dyer

Inspector

Mandy Williams, Social Care Inspector

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