

2510328

Registered provider: Hand in Hand Childcare

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to three children who have suffered early childhood trauma. A private company runs the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2020.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We visited this setting on 28 and 29 October 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. Widespread concerns were identified. We last visited this setting on 21 December 2020 to carry out a monitoring visit, when improvements had been made to the quality of care provided to children. Both reports are published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 November 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	Inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
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There are serious and widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, and the care and experiences of children are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 21 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/01/2020	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

One child was living at the home at the time of this inspection. Two children living at the home at the time of the monitoring visit in December 2020 had returned to live with their families. Three further children had moved in and out of the home. All left sooner than anticipated and in an unplanned way.

When children move into the home their needs and risks are not considered by managers. As a result, children with complex and challenging behaviours are not matched appropriately. Ineffective care planning means that children living at the home have been left vulnerable when new children's risks were not assessed appropriately. In addition, one child had to travel a significant distance to and from school each day and managers did not consider the impact this would have on his emotional well-being and behaviour.

Managers and staff do not understand children's needs well. The manager told the inspector that the child living at the home does not have any health needs, which is incorrect. Information about the child's diagnosed health needs is also not clearly set out in his written plans. As a result, staff do not have information about how these may impact on the child and any additional support he may need. The same child is not supported by staff to understand his cultural background and identity. Poor assessment, understanding and review of children's needs compromises children's progress.

Staff do not have the confidence and experience to meet children's needs. Many staff do not understand how children's previous experiences are communicated through their behaviour and responses. One social worker said, 'Staff didn't seem well equipped to deal with [child] or to have had sufficient training. There were staff on duty who were not able to intervene. They are clearly not equipped.' This does not fit with the home's statement of purpose, which states that children will receive care from a skilled staff team with experience in managing challenging behaviours.

The manner in which staff speak to children is inappropriate. The inspector viewed records which identified serious shortfalls in the way in which staff speak to and write about children. This is not identified or addressed by managers. This poor practice compromises children's opportunity to build positive relationships with adults who care for them. In addition, if children want to access their records now or in the future, they will see inappropriate and demeaning language used to describe them.

Staff do not have the skills to manage children's behaviour and this has resulted in significant damage being caused in the home. For example, there are no working televisions in lounge areas because these have been smashed during incidents and there are holes in some walls. Managers have initiated plans to place locks on

lounge doors as a behaviour management strategy. There is a sign on the office door that states children should not enter unless invited. This does not promote a warm and welcoming environment for children.

Children's care plans do not contain up-to-date information relating to their individual needs. Managers have failed to obtain the most up-to-date care plans from children's placing authorities. For example, one child is not spending time with his sibling as often as he should be, as set out in his care plan. Managers and staff are not clear why and have not done anything to address it. This means that the child is missing out on spending time with someone who is important to him.

Notwithstanding the serious shortfalls identified, the child living in the home has good rates of attendance at school. He also has opportunities to participate in activities that he enjoys. For example, he has enjoyed outings to the cinema and his interest in fashion design is encouraged by staff. During the inspection, staff provided the child with an opportunity to celebrate Diwali. The child told the inspector that he thinks the staff are nice.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Risk assessments fail to provide staff with guidance or strategies to manage risks to children and keep them safe. The risk assessment for the child living in the home does not set out guidance for staff about online safety, yet this has been a significant risk since the child moved into the home. There is some guidance in place for staff about the steps to take if children go missing from home. However, this does not go far enough. For example, when children go missing from home, they use public transport and travel some distance from the home. This information is not included in children's risk assessments. A lack of information in risk assessments means that staff are not provided with guidance and strategies to manage and reduce risks to children to keep them safe.

Staff supervision of children is inadequate. This increased the risk to one child, who went missing from the home because staff were not supervising him appropriately. On another occasion, the same child was able to access a sharp vegetable knife and take this into school. Managers do not support staff to reflect and learn from incidents. These shortfalls compromise children's safety.

At times, staff need to restrain children to keep the child and others safe. Restraint records are not always accurate and so it is not clear whether children and staff have been injured and whether they have required medical attention. In addition, managers do not ensure that children are spoken to about what happened by someone who was not part of the incident. Poor management oversight of restraint records and practice leaves children vulnerable and at risk of harm.

Managers have failed to ensure that appropriate action is taken when children make allegations against staff. For example, a member of staff subject to an allegation from a child continued to work at the home. Managers did not seek any advice from the designated officer before making this decision or consider relieving the member

of staff from their duties while this advice was sought. This lack of action leaves children at risk of being cared for by people who have allegedly caused them harm. On one occasion, this resulted in a member of staff completing a debrief with a child who had made an allegation against them. This does not help children to feel safe.

Staff do not undertake direct work with children to help them understand the impact of bullying. Furthermore, only three members of staff have attended antibullying training. This is a missed opportunity to help staff to understand more about how to prevent bullying happening and respond appropriately when it does.

The home's location risk assessment lacks relevant information and, although updated recently, this has not included any consultation with relevant agencies such as the police. This does not show that managers work proactively and thoroughly to promote children's safety.

Records show that staff are recruited safely. Staff are vetted and assessed as suitable before any appointment is confirmed. These procedures help to prevent unsuitable adults from working with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The manager does not demonstrate that he has the skills to manage the home effectively and keep children safe. Managers have failed to deal with the ineffective and poor practice of some staff. As a result, children's safety is compromised and they are not receiving good-quality care.

High staff turnover means that children receive care from inexperienced staff who are not appropriately trained to meet their needs. On more than one occasion, there has not been a staff member on shift who is trained in first aid. On other occasions, staff working with children have not been trained to safely manage complex and challenging behaviours. This means that police have had to be called to the home to manage children's behaviours. Staff have been physically assaulted because they are unable to help children regulate their emotions. Some staff are still not trained in physical intervention. This leaves children and staff vulnerable and at risk of harm and children at greater risk of being criminalised.

Staff do not receive regular supervision that promotes their development and allows them to reflect on the care they provide to children and the quality of the relationships they have with them. Consequently, staff have not been provided with adequate support during difficult times to help them and to help them improve their care of children.

Staff do not receive training that supports them to understand and respond to children's needs effectively. For example, staff have not had training in self-harm, e-safety and child exploitation, despite managers being aware that these were significant risks for children. As a result, staff remain uninformed about how to respond safely and provide children with appropriate care.

The manager's monitoring and oversight of the service is weak. He does not have a full understanding of the strengths of the home and shortfalls in practice. Children are not provided with sufficient opportunities to share their views about the care they receive. Consultation with children and external stakeholders does not form part of the home's review of quality of care. Ineffective evaluation of the service does not support managers to improve children's experiences.

The manager has failed to notify Ofsted of serious incidents that have occurred at the home. This means that he does not keep all relevant people informed, and this does not promote children's welfare.

The responsible individual fails to identify and address shortfalls in the management and leadership in the home. Serious safeguarding incidents have occurred. The responsible individual has been aware of these incidents but has not ensured that the manager has taken appropriate action to safeguard children.

In response to the serious failings found in respect of safeguarding children and the leadership and management of the home, a notice restricting the accommodation of this home was issued on 8 November 2021. Six compliance notices have been issued.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)) In particular, ensure that improvements are made to the home environment, repairs are carried out promptly and internal doors to the home are not locked as a means of managing behaviour.	12 December 2021
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—	12 December 2021

ensure that staff— regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care; (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(iv)) In particular, ensure that children have the opportunity to express their views, wishes and feelings on a regular basis.	
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans; understand the child's health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child's health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)) In particular, that managers and staff are aware of children's health needs, and there are clear plans in place to support children's health needs.	12 December 2021
*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—	12 December 2021

that staff— meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding; communicate to each child expectations about the child’s behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child’s age and understanding; 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; are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; and that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(ix)(x)(xi)(xii)(xiii)(b)) In particular, ensure that staff speak to and write about children in an appropriate manner. Ensure that children receive support from staff who understand their needs and help children to manage their behaviours more appropriately.	
*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—	12 December 2021

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; 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; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) In particular, ensure that safeguarding concerns are identified and responded to. In addition, ensure that each child has a risk assessment which provides staff with strategies to follow to keep children safe and that staff implement the guidance in these risk assessments.	
*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;	12 December 2021

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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)(h)) This relates to ensuring staff have received relevant training and supervision. In addition, the manager must implement effective monitoring systems, and regularly review and evaluate the quality of care to ensure that shortfalls are identified and rectified.	
*The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and 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; that arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority; that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14) (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(ii)(iii)(c))	12 December 2021
*A responsible individual must—	12 December 2021

have the capacity, experience and skills to supervise the management of the home, or the homes, in respect of which the responsible individual is nominated. (Regulation 26 (7)(b))	
A person may only manage a children's home if— 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. (Regulation 28 (1)(b)(i))	12 December 2021
The registered person must ensure that— at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 31 (2)(a))	12 December 2021
*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 ensure that— 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; the date, time and location of 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;	12 December 2021

the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result 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) (3)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) In particular, managers must ensure that all incidents of staff restraining a child are recorded accurately and in line with regulation. In addition, ensure that managers review incidents effectively and that children and staff involved receive a debrief.	
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))	12 December 2021
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(i))	12 December 2021
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months.	12 December 2021

In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children’s home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (5))	
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))	12 December 2021

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

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: 2510328

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hand in Hand Childcare

Registered provider address: 20 Birmingham Road, Walsall WS1 2LT

Responsible individual: Rajvinder Kaur

Registered manager: Andrew Alexander

Inspector

Natasha Skinner, Social Care Inspector

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