

2510328

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to three young people who have suffered early childhood trauma. A private company owns and operates this home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2020.

Visit dates: 28 to 29 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 21 January 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be good

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 the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Young people's risks are not safely assessed and fully understood by staff.
- Poor matching of young people has placed them at risk.
- Young people's health needs are not understood by staff, leaving them at risk of harm.
- Managers and staff lack awareness of potential risks to young people in the area local to the home.
- The registered manager has failed to take effective action when safeguarding concerns have arisen.
- The internal monitoring of the home is ineffective.
- Recruitment of staff is not always safe.
- The staff do not have all the relevant documentation relating to young people's education, health and care needs and this undermines their ability to support children's progress.

The care of children

Three young people live at the home. Since the previous inspection, two young people have left the home and two new young people have moved in. Planning for young people to move into the home is weak. For example, the registered manager failed to consider the known risks and vulnerabilities of a young person already living at the home when making plans for an older young person to move in. Despite knowing the young person did not wish to live with a younger peer, he still moved in. Poor matching affects young people's experiences. In this instance, the older young person assaulted a younger peer.

Staff do not understand young people's health needs well. For example, one young person's risk assessment refers to him having an allergy and needing to have emergency medication available. However, the registered manager and staff did not know if this emergency medication is actually required and as such no rescue medication is available. Failure to understand young people's emergency health needs poses a significant risk to their welfare. The manager was taking steps to address this following the inspection.

The registered manager and staff do not have access to all the young people's written plans. For example, one young person is subject to an education, health and care plan, but no copy of this document is kept at the home. As a result, the registered manager and staff are unaware of the specific needs of this young person and how best to meet them.

Staff are supporting young people well through COVID-19 and did so during lockdown too. Young people engaged in a range of activities in the home to keep active and motivated. Contact with family, friends and key people was facilitated through garden visits and video calls. This enabled young people to keep in touch with people who are important to them.

The physical environment is well maintained and provides a homely place for young people. Food menus are well planned, with young people's input. Staff have good relationships with the young people. Feedback from key professionals about the care in the home is positive.

The safety of children

The registered manager failed to act on information that he received indicating that a young person may have been exposed to COVID-19. This inaction showed a lack of regard for the young person's health and posed a risk to the other young people, staff and the wider community.

Despite one young person being at risk of criminal exploitation, the registered manager has not ensured that staff know what action to take to reduce the risk of harm. Furthermore, the registered manager and responsible individual have not ensured that a full assessment of the location and local area risks to young people has been undertaken. A lack of safety planning places young vulnerable people at risk of harm.

The recruitment of new staff is not safe. For example, the registered manager has not ensured that there is a full employment history for a member of staff who has been recruited through an agency. A lack of scrutiny during the recruitment process means that unsuitable people may work at the home and care for young people.

Staff do not help young people to understand the risks that they encounter. For example, one young person returned to the home from seeing family members and reported that he had misused drugs. Although staff sought appropriate medical advice and the young person came to no harm on this occasion, no follow-up learning and discussion about what had happened was undertaken with him.

The registered manager does not oversee the use of sanctions. It is unclear if sanctions used are effective or appropriate in managing young people's behaviours and used in a restorative way.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager does not read young people's records to check for accuracy, provide oversight and keep up to date with events. As a result, the registered manager did not know when a young person last saw his family members and so could not respond appropriately when a concern relating to COVID-19 arose. In addition, the registered manager does not maintain oversight of the home's weekly health and safety checks to ensure that the home and the home's vehicle are well maintained.

The registered manager has not provided an effective review of the quality of care in the home. The six-monthly quality of care review report does not analyse what has gone well and does not set out a plan for how the home can develop. In addition, the registered manager has not sought feedback from the young people,

their families and key professionals. This was a missed opportunity to understand what young people and others think about the quality of care staff provided.

Staff receive good supervision from the registered manager. Reflective sessions are held following significant incidents to help staff learn from what has happened. Serious incidents are well recorded, for example, a reflective session was held following a significant incident when a young person assaulted a peer. The staff member had not adhered to the staffing level required and this was discussed and addressed appropriately.

The responsible individual is not effectively supervising the registered manager. Shortfalls in the manager's running of the home and a lack of oversight have not been addressed. As a result, young people do not receive good-quality care and their welfare and safety is not promoted in line with the aims and objectives set out in the home's statement of purpose.

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 health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met. 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)(2)(a)(i)(ii))	18/12/2020
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;	18/12/2020

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. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(v)(vi))	
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— 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)(f)(h))	18/12/2020
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. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b))	18/12/2020
A responsible individual must— 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))	18/12/2020
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— 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)(d)) In particular, obtain a full employment history, together with a satisfactory explanation of any gaps in employment, in writing.	18/12/2020
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—	18/12/2020

include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. (Regulation 36 (1)(a))	
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. 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))	30/03/2021
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))	18/12/2020

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 (PSHE). Staff should have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to help children understand, and where necessary work to change negative behaviours in key areas of health and well-being such as, but not limited to, nutrition and healthy diet, exercise, mental health, sexual relationships, sexual health, contraception and use of legal highs, drugs, alcohol and tobacco. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35 paragraph 7.18)

In particular, ensure that staff help children to understand about the risks relating to drug misuse.
- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair and the above principles as set out in 9.35 are respected. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46 paragraph 9.36)

In particular, ensure that managers review the effectiveness and appropriateness of sanctions.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2510328

Registered provider: Hand in Hand Childcare Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Rajvinder Sandhu

Registered manager: Andrew Alexander

Inspector

James Tallis, Social Care Inspector

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