

2519269

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children aged eight to 18 who have social and/or emotional difficulties.

The home's registered manager has the relevant qualifications and has been in post since July 2019.

No children were living at the home when the assurance visit was conducted.

Visit dates: 4 to 5 November 2020

Previous inspection date: 7 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 widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Staff do not have access to up-to-date risk assessments to help them keep children safe.
- Staff do not have clear missing-from-care protocols to follow when children go missing from the home.
- Children's placements end abruptly.
- Staff and managers do not support children to move placements in a planned way.
- The consultation for the matching of children is weak.
- Children do not have clear and consistent boundaries.
- Key-work sessions do not provide in-depth learning to help children to make safe decisions.

The care of children

Since April 2020, three children have moved out of the home.

Children have lived at the home for short periods of time and their placements have ended abruptly. As a result, children have not experienced positive ends to their placements.

When new children have moved into the home, social workers and children have not been well consulted to ensure that the matching of children is right. This failure to consult means that decisions have been ill-informed.

One child moved on from the home after the organisation decided to serve notice on the child's placement. This child had a history of smoking cannabis and was found to be smoking cannabis in the home. The registered manager and staff did not demonstrate that they had the skills and experience to meet this child's needs. Direct work carried out by the staff was not meaningful or effective in helping the child. As a result, staff were unable to meet his needs and his placement was ended.

Due to COVID-19, children have experienced delays in attending new schools. Staff have supported children with their home learning education plans. This has included teaching children life skills such as budgeting, cooking, and shopping.

During the time the children were living at the home, they were able to enjoy leisure activities, such as going to the park and meeting friends.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, children were able to continue to speak with their families.

Staff supported the children to attend appointments for their physical and mental health needs during their time at the home. Despite the challenges imposed by COVID-19, staff ensured that children were able to attend specialist appointments. This included attending appointments with the child and adolescent mental health service.

The home has benefited from redecoration. This has helped to create an increasingly homely environment.

The safety of children

Staff have educated children about the risks of COVID-19 and how to keep themselves safe. Visitors to the home have been limited due to the pandemic. Visitors have their temperature taken on arrival to the home. Staff ask visitors about any possible COVID-19 symptoms before they can enter. These measures help reduce the possible risk of infection to children and staff.

Staff are not experienced in working with children who have a history of self-harm, including those whose behaviours are potentially life threatening. This lack of knowledge compromised one child's placement. The child's incidents of self-harming intensified during their time at the home. This triggered a high number of police and ambulance call outs and the abrupt ending of their placement.

Risk assessments are missing important information. The registered manager has not provided staff with clear and effective risk assessments to help them keep children safe. For example, individualised risk assessments do not detail specific steps to take when a child goes missing from the home. This includes failing to be clear how long staff should wait before informing essential agencies, such as the police. This has created unnecessary delay in having the right help.

Staff have failed to offer children with clear and consistent boundaries. One social worker commented that a lack of boundaries for a child resulted in their behaviour escalating.

Leaders and managers

The statement of purpose does not match the care that children receive. For example, the statement of purpose indicates that children will live in the home for a minimum of six months. However, recent placements have been considerably shorter.

The registered manager's six-monthly report about the quality of care lacks consultation with children, parents/carers and professionals. This creates a missed opportunity to secure the views of essential stakeholders.

Staff supervision sessions are effective and are completed within required timescales. The registered manager acknowledges that some of the decisions about children's placements have been ill-informed. As a result, a decision has been made to pause

taking any new children until managers and staff have had time to reflect on practice and for everyone to receive additional training.

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. Help children develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult; meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(vi))	31/12/2020
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— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's	31/12/2020

best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i))	
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— that staff— meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plan's; 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; strive to gain each child's respect and trust; 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; Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(viii)(ix))	31/12/2020
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—	31/12/2020

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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(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— 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; 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))	31/12/2020
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.	31/12/2020

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— ensure the effective induction of each child into the home; 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. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(i)(ii)(iii))	
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. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c))	31/12/2020

Recommendations

- The information set out in the Statement of Purpose is an essential part of the process of agreement between the registered person and placing authority that a placement in that home is the right one for that child, and that the home will be able to respond effectively to the child's assessed needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.6)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2519269

Registered provider: New Futures (Children) Services Ltd

Registered provider address: 77 Francis Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 8SP

Responsible individual: Tyrell Simpson

Registered manager: Creaton Allen

Inspector

Jodie Lewis, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2020