

2522240

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five children and/or young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural issues. The home registered in May 2019 and is operated by a private provider. The manager registered in June 2020.

Visit dates: 15 to 16 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 10 February 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Declined in effectiveness

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 did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Young people form trusting relationships with staff; they speak highly of their caring adults. Young people confidently share their views, wishes and feelings, and staff respond to their requests where appropriate.

Staff work closely with education providers and support young people in the home with learning packs provided by school. Young people were supported throughout lockdown to achieve certification in a wide range of online learning, including a 'Coronavirus Outbreak' course to help young people understand the pandemic.

Young people who face difficulty with attending an educational setting are encouraged by staff to believe in themselves and to develop an interest in learning. This helps young people transition back into learning and improve their attendance. As a result, young people develop confidence and aspirations for their future.

The manager understands the importance of young people being able to continue to stay in touch with significant people in their lives. Staff help by making the contact arrangements based on their individual needs. The manager invites young people's family members to the home, when it is appropriate to do so.

Staff sensitively support young people with their emotional and health needs, offering young people guidance and advice where appropriate. Young people are helped to access specialist services for more complex needs. Some case records contain language that could be perceived by young people as stigmatising. A recommendation is made to address this.

Young people are involved in a project supplying food and essentials to those in need in the community. Photographs of this work are displayed in communal areas of the home, which is a vibrant reminder for young people of their positive involvement in their community.

The safety of children

Transitions into the home are risk assessed effectively, including the risk that COVID-19 presents. Measures are put in place to reduce this risk to young people and keep them safe.

Young people know how to complain and use this process to share concerns they have. These concerns are taken seriously and responded to promptly by staff.

Young people's case records showed that an incentive was needed to help them achieve specific goals. However, these were then transferred to their incentive

charts. Some of the targets in incentive charts were vague and non-specific. This means that the expectations of staff about how young people achieve these goals can vary, which gives young people mixed messages. A requirement is made.

Staff follow risk assessments closely and identify creative strategies to help young people become safer. One professional commented that the staff are 'keen to think outside the box' and another said that they 'refuse to give up'. The persistent and determined approach of staff has seen a reduction in the number of incidents of young people going missing from the home.

The staff team recognises that tension among the young people increased during the lockdown period. Young people were taken on separate holidays to relieve this tension, which has helped to improve relationships between them.

Leaders and managers

The manager has been registered since June 2020 and is suitably qualified and experienced for the position held. She is supported by a deputy who is also appropriately skilled and trained. The small and stable staff team provides consistency for the young people.

The manager and deputy monitor and review the care that young people receive. They value the input of the independent visitor and use this to develop the service and make improvements.

Staff receive regular supervision and use this opportunity to reflect on their practice. The responsible individual has developed a monthly workshop as an additional learning and reflection tool to drive improvement forward.

The manager shows effective multi-agency working. She ensures that appropriate information is shared promptly with relevant partner agencies. Some meetings have been held virtually so that there is no delay in devising and implementing action plans for young people.

The manager uses her position to advocate on behalf of young people, challenging professionals when necessary. The manager spoke with professionals regarding the easing of lockdown restrictions when she identified that young people were being unnecessarily prevented from socialising. As a result, young people have enjoyed the benefits of reduced restrictions, in line with the current government guidelines.

The requirements made at the last inspection have been met.

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 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— 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. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(v)) In particular, ensure that incentives are individualised and specific so that the expectations of children are explicitly clear.	20/10/2020

Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2522240

Registered provider: Investing in Children CIC

Registered provider address: Sjovoll Centre, Front Street, Pity Me, Durham DH1 5BZ

Responsible individual: Julie Scurfield

Registered manager: Dawn Bewick

Inspector

Paula Kelly, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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