

2522240

Registered provider: Investing in Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private organisation and may provide care for up to five children who have emotional and social difficulties.

Four children were living in the home at the time of inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2023.

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 18 October 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/10/2022	Full	Good
13/12/2021	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/07/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
10/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make progress from their starting points. Children are supported in all aspects of their lives to make positive decisions. Staff support and encourage children's interests and hobbies. Children spoke positively about the staff. One child described their experience of living in the home as 'brilliant'.

Children are supported to develop trusting relationships with members of staff. Children have trusted adults who they can talk to if they need support or advice. Staff spend time with children to ensure that children feel listened to and encourage children to express their wishes and feelings. This helps children feel valued.

It is important to staff that children make progress in their education. Some children struggle to attend their school or college placements. When this happens, staff work with other professionals to find other solutions. Children are supported to engage with alternative education provisions or find employment opportunities. This helps children to learn skills that will help them as they become more independent.

Children are supported by staff to attend health appointments. Staff work with children to help them understand the importance of being fit and well. Staff respond quickly to support children when they need medical attention. Staff make referrals for more support to help improve children's health and well-being when this is needed. This reinforces the message to children that their well-being is important to staff.

The manager and staff develop positive relationships with children's families. Staff make arrangements for children to spend time with their family and friends, and they are welcomed into the home. Consequently, children are able to maintain close relationships with those who are important to them.

The manager has plans in place to refurbish the kitchen, which is looking tired, and replace carpets to improve the property. Children's bedrooms are personalised, though damage to walls in children's bedrooms is evident but not repaired as a matter of priority. One child has needed to move out of their bedroom because of delays to repairs and worries about the impact on their health. The home has a garden area with new furniture and planting so children can enjoy all areas of the home.

The home has CCTV fitted to monitor the exterior of the premises. There is a policy in place for monitoring and surveillance. However, managers have not sought consent for this surveillance from the children's placing authorities. It is unclear whether they or the children are aware of its use.

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

Staff take quick and appropriate action when there are safeguarding concerns related to the children. Safeguarding procedures are followed by staff and the recording of any incidents is clear and detailed. Staff and children are involved in debriefs after incidents to help understand how best to support a child in a similar situation.

Children's risk assessments are detailed and provide up-to-date information about children's risk behaviours and vulnerabilities. Staff work well with other professionals to manage risks to children. Direct work with children also takes place to help children to understand how to keep themselves safer.

When children go missing from the home, staff follow procedures to support children to return safely. Staff search for children and try to keep in touch with them when they are missing. Staff respond consistently to support children who go missing from home. This includes requesting return home interviews so that children have an independent person to discuss what has happened. This means children who go missing know that staff are concerned for their safety and welfare.

Physical interventions in the home are rare, as staff use their de-escalation skills to reduce the need for restraint. When restraint has been used, this has been assessed as necessary and children and staff are supported appropriately afterwards. This ensures that practice is safe and that any restraint is proportionate and necessary to protect children.

When bedroom searches are undertaken, the rationale for undertaking them is appropriate. However, the records do not evidence if children are informed of room searches in advance or whether consent is sought. This does not ensure that children are consulted in relation to decisions or actions to keep them safer.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Managers use their resources well and arrange for staff to have child-focused consultations with a psychologist. This provides staff with advice and support and helps them to understand children's life history. Consequently, staff are better equipped to respond effectively to the needs of children.

Staff receive regular reflective supervisions and appraisals that are focused on the needs of the children. Team meetings incorporate discussions about the children and encourage staff to learn from practice. Staff said they feel well supported by managers and are aware of other support they can access for their own well-being should they need this. This shows that leaders and managers value their staff and understand the challenges they face.

The manager uses monitoring systems to review and evaluate the quality of care provided in the home. This is not always effective, as one child's home plan was out of date and did not reflect the child's current family time and education

arrangements. Furthermore, not all children's records, such as missing from home records, have management oversight. This means that managers may not be effective in evaluating children's experiences and able to make improvements to children's care.

The home often uses agency staff to ensure that there are enough staff to meet the needs of the children. The number of changes in staff may have an impact on children's continuity of care.

Safe recruitment is in place to ensure that adults who work in the home are appropriately vetted. New staff are supported through an induction programme and are then enrolled to gain essential qualifications. The manager reviews agency workers to ensure that they have the experience and training to care for children safely.

The independent visitor has previously held the roles of manager and responsible individual. This means the independent visitor has been involved in care planning for the children and supervision of some of the staff. This may impact on the independent visitor's impartiality when completing their monthly report for 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, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(2)(e)(h))	4 August 2023
The registered provider must appoint, at the registered provider's expense, a person ("the independent person") to visit and report on the children's home carried on by the registered provider. Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), the registered provider may not appoint the following as an independent person— a person involved in preparing the care plan of any child placed at the home, or a person responsible for managing or supervising that person; a person who has, or has had, a connection with— the registered person; a person working at the home; or which the registered provider considers to give rise to doubts about that person's impartiality (for the purposes of producing the independent person's report – see regulation 44).	4 August 2023

If the registered provider becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest in relation to the independent person before or during the independent person visiting the home (see regulation 44), the registered provider must—

appoint a different independent person to visit the home.
(Regulation 43 (1)(3)(c)(g)(i)(ii)(7)(b))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that rooms are only searched if the child has been informed or asked for their permission. Children should ideally be present. Immediate searching may be necessary where there are reasonable grounds for believing that there is a risk to the child's or another person's safety or well-being. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.20)
- The registered person should ensure that children's homes are nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that any home using CCTV or other monitoring equipment should have a written policy describing how this will support the safeguarding and well-being of those living and working in the home in accordance with regulation 24. Homes must gain consent to any monitoring or surveillance by the placing authority in writing at the time of the placement. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.16)
- Under regulation 46, the registered person should review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards' page 64, paragraph 15.1)

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: 2522240

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Investing in Children

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

Responsible individual: Robert Medcalf

Registered manager: Ann-Marie Lang

Inspector

Joanne Wallis, Social Care Inspector

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