

2526435

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home registered in July 2019 and is one of two homes operated by a small private provider. The home provides care for up to three children who cannot live at home or in a foster placement because of their social, emotional and behavioural needs.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2020. He is suitably experienced but has yet to begin working towards a relevant level 5 qualification.

Visit dates: 13 to 14 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 22 October 2019

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 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

The home is currently providing care for three young people. Two young people have moved out and three young people have moved into the home since 1 April 2020. The manager plans each new admission prior to a young person's arrival. However, planning for one young person did not fully include how their cultural needs would be met. The matching assessments do not demonstrate that full consideration is given to the impact of a new young person moving into the home on the existing group of young people.

The staff have supported the young people effectively throughout the period of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. They have ensured that the young people are able to access the healthcare services that they need to keep healthy.

The young people have been resistant to working on the education activities set by the staff. However, the staff have encouraged and supported the young people to focus on and participate in home-based activities, including gardening and baking, which have encouraged numeracy and literacy. The staff have recently successfully motivated one young person who has been out of education for over a year to return to school. This is giving this young person a real sense of pride and achievement.

The manager has challenged a placing local authority on its failure to visit its young person to ensure that their safety and well-being are maintained.

The young people have been supported to maintain virtual, and later appropriately socially distanced, contact with their families and friends. The provider has been creative and sourced a property where the young people can meet with their family or friends safely outside of the home.

Some of the young people have made some very positive relationships with staff. One young person has written a very moving leaving speech to the staff about his experiences while living at the home. He said, 'I've built one awesome family and made some memories that will last a lifetime.'

The safety of children

The young people feel safe and well supported by the staff. COVID-19 has presented some additional challenges with group dynamics among previous residents potentially becoming more fractured due to the increased close-living situation. However, staff supported the young people through this and the current group has gelled well.

The staff work with the young people to manage their individual risks and emerging need for independence. Most young people can leave the home without staff for a specified time. However, the home's front doors were locked when the inspector arrived, and it is not clear how often this occurs. The manager explained that this was to prevent the young people leaving due to generalised concerns regarding COVID-19 and the risk of a young person going missing from the home. COVID-19 is not a valid reason to remove freedom of movement. There were relevant and immediate concerns that this young person may go missing. However, there were no risk assessments in respect of this deprivation of liberty for either this young person or the other young people and there was no record held of this deprivation of liberty.

Young people's risk management plans and missing-from-home risk assessments have been improved since the last inspection. However, one young person's risk assessment has not been updated to reflect a reduction in risk. This means that there is potential for staff to not have a shared understanding of the personal freedoms that the young person is currently able to enjoy.

Sanctions are sometimes poorly recorded. Therefore, it is not always clear why a sanction has been used, when the sanction has been applied, the length of the sanction or its effectiveness. For example, sanctions have been applied for negative behaviour, going missing from home or damages, without specifying what these behaviours were or why the child was sanctioned. Therefore, it is difficult to understand whether these approaches were proportionate or successful.

The home has a suitable fire alarm system and fire doors fitted throughout. However, the fire doors are not fitted with automatic closures and the manager is unaware whether the local fire prevention officer has reviewed the suitability of these arrangements. Therefore, it is not clear whether these doors would be fully effective in the event of a fire.

Leaders and managers

The current manager, who was registered in August 2020, has worked at the home for a significant time. The management oversight has improved since the last inspection and the majority of requirements and recommendations set at the previous inspection have been met.

The manager has been able to maintain suitable staffing arrangements, which has ensured that the young people have continued to receive continuity of care. The young people spoke warmly about the caring and supportive members of staff.

The ethos of the home is based on therapeutic principles. The manager provides the staff with a selection of relevant information in a variety of media regarding therapeutic approaches and the model of care. However, most staff have not undertaken this training. This means that the staff may not have an equally shared understanding of the therapeutic principles of care that the home strives to provide.

Although the quality of record-keeping has improved since the last inspection, there is still not consistently enough attention to detail. Some records lack important information, and, on one occasion, the young person's name was recorded incorrectly in a care plan.

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 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— the name of the child; 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; the name of the person who used the measure ('the user'), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a 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')—	07/12/2020

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 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) In particular, record sanctions in line with the regulation.	
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Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc). However, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
In particular, seek guidance from the local fire prevention officer on the home's fire prevention arrangements.
- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- Ensure that staff can access appropriate resources to support their training needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
In particular, ensure that most of the staff undertake training on therapeutic approaches and the model of care used at the home.
- Restraint also includes restricting a child's liberty of movement. This includes, for example, changes to the physical environment of the home (such as using high door handles) and removal of physical aids (such as turning off a child's electric wheelchair). Restrictions such as these, and all other restrictions of liberty of movement, should be recorded as restraint. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 47, paragraph 9.42)
- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as

recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

In particular, ensure that the written impact risk assessment evidences how the child's holistic needs will be met and that full consideration has been given to the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children.

- 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: 2526435

Registered provider: Shalamar Children Limited

Registered provider address: 31B King Street, Stanford-Le-Hope, Essex SS17 0HJ

Responsible individual: Samuel Connor

Registered manager: Colin Gee

Inspector

Joanna Heller, Social Care Inspector

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