

2527558

Registered provider: ROC Northwest Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five children who may have emotional or behavioural needs. There were three children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The home is one of a number of homes operated by a large, private organisation.

There is currently no registered manager in place. A new manager has been appointed and has submitted an application to register with Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 20 to 21 April 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: Not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: Not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children's progress is mixed. They have made good progress in some areas but have not done as well in others. There have been some positive outcomes for children, including one child's successful transition to foster care which was supported well by managers and staff.

Staff demonstrate an understanding of children's individual needs, and they are able to discuss children's day-to-day care and support. However, shortfalls in some aspects of care planning were identified. For example, information in relation to a child's medication regimen lacked sufficient detail. In another example, there was a lack of information about how a child had been impacted by a bereavement.

One child has been without education or training for a significant amount of time. Another child has faced personal barriers to learning. In both cases, partnership working with external professionals could be more effective in ensuring that children receive effective support. In addition, arrangements for home-based learning lack clarity.

Children's care plans describe the support they require to maintain valued relationships. When there have been difficulties arranging face-to-face contact with families due to COVID-19, staff have tried to support children to engage in video calls with their families. However, this has not always been possible due to limitations with the home's internet.

The home has been without a reliable internet connection for several months. This has had a demonstrable impact on children's experiences and progress. Social workers and an education professional raised concerns about this matter. Also, children have frequently raised the matter with managers and staff. One child said that the lack of internet was getting him down.

One child is due to transition to independence in the near future. Staff are supporting him to develop his independence skills on a day-to-day basis. However, there is no clear plan in place and there has been a failure to identify his individual needs, strengths and progress. This means that the child may not receive effective support to prepare for his transition.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Managers and staff are provided with safeguarding training as part of their mandatory learning programme. When safeguarding concerns are identified, appropriate action is taken, including prompt referral to the relevant authorities.

Identified risks are assessed and risk management plans are developed to provide staff with guidance. Risk management plans vary in quality. In some examples,

plans do not contain up-to-date information, and they lack clarity about measures required to protect children from harm.

Risks relating to one child's vulnerability to exploitation have reduced since his admission. This is positive progress. However, a family member expressed concern that the current level of direct work being carried out with the child is not sufficient to help him develop a greater understanding of personal safety or safe relationships and, therefore, may not support his safer future.

Records of physical restraints are completed to a good standard. The manager monitors restraints effectively to ensure that they are appropriate and carried out in a safe manner. There is a good level of reflection with both children and staff which helps to ensure that any potential learning is identified.

At times, staff may use consequences to help children learn about the impact of their behaviours. Records demonstrate that the use of consequences is inconsistent and, in the two examples seen, it is not fair or proportionate. Managers have recognised this is an area for improvement, and they have recently carried out some workshop-style training with staff.

Relationships between children are, generally, positive. Staff manage incidents between children well. There are examples of positive, restorative work carried out with children to assist them in maintaining their friendships, following poor behaviours towards each other.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The home is currently without a registered manager. A new manager has been appointed and has submitted an application to register with Ofsted. There has been a well-planned handover, with the outgoing manager maintaining some input and providing mentoring to her successor.

Feedback from external professionals who have worked with the home was mixed. Some professionals spoke highly of the home and expressed satisfaction with the care provided. However, several expressed concerns about a lack of communication, and about the difficulties in actually contacting the home due to a poor phone signal and lack of internet.

One child's placing authority has failed to meet their statutory responsibilities in terms of pathway planning and education. While the manager has had ongoing discussions with the placing authority and raised concerns, she has failed to escalate the matters sufficiently, despite the significant timescales involved. As a result, the child's best interests have not been promoted.

There has been a large turnover of staff which has resulted in a general lack of experience across the team. Currently, no staff other than the manager have an appropriate qualification in children's residential care. All staff have, however,

benefited from a mandatory training programme, which includes safeguarding and first aid.

Currently, the home is without internet for the majority of time. This has impacted on children's experiences, particularly in relation to having time with friends and family and on education. The manager has attempted to resolve the matter for several months but has not received sufficient support from the provider to do so. Ofsted have been advised that a solution has now been identified and that the matter should be rectified in coming weeks. However, it is of concern that the issue has been allowed to continue for such a significant amount of time.

There have been some significant incidents within the home which have not been reported to Ofsted. Failure to notify Ofsted of significant events impedes our ability to monitor services effectively and, therefore, fails to promote children's safety and well-being.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; and if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c))	4 June 2021
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; and help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii))	4 June 2021

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; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; 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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and 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)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(ii)(h))	4 June 2021
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—	4 June 2021

that arrangements are in place to— 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; that, subject to regulation 22 (contact and access to communications), contact between each child and the child’s parents, relatives and friends, is promoted in accordance with the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(b)(iii)(d))	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	4 June 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children receive practical, individualised support to prepare for their move away from the home. This support should take into account the child's individual strengths and needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27)
- The registered person should ensure that children who are not in education or training are engaged in suitable structured activities relevant to their individual needs and interests. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- The registered person should ensure that all sanctions are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair and proportionate and that they are relevant and restorative in nature. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)
- The registered person should ensure that the independent person makes efforts to speak with children and obtain their views during the independent person's visits to the home. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)

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: 2527558

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: ROC Northwest Limited

Registered provider address: 5th Floor, Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane,
Potters Bar, EN6 1AG

Responsible individual: Katie Stephens

Registered manager: Post Vacant

Inspectors

Marie Cordingley, Social Care Inspector
Rachel Springford, Social Care Inspector

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