

2527654

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a limited company. It can provide care and support for up to two young people who may have emotional or social or learning difficulties.

The registered manager has been registered since 1 July 2020.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 5 February 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 no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Young people are happy and safe. They enjoy friendly relationships with staff. Young people are supported by staff. They are comfortable talking to staff about their worries. They feel listened to and that staff give them the help that they need.

Young people continue to keep in touch with their families. Staff have helped young people to use technology to talk to their families during times of lockdown and social distancing. With the easing of these restrictions, staff have supported young people to spend time with their families. Gradually, young people are spending more time with their families and rebuilding important relationships.

Staff promote young people's learning. Young people have returned to school and college. A young person said that staff are good at 'getting me to do things, like getting up for school. If it hadn't been for the staff on today I wouldn't have gone.' Staff have worked effectively with local authorities and education providers. Together, they make sure that young people are getting the support they need in education.

Staff do not have the in-depth knowledge, training and skills to understand how young people's experiences and feelings can be communicated through behaviour.

Young people's care plans are updated. However, not all plans provide staff with sufficient guidance to understand and meet the individual complex needs of all the young people.

The safety of children

Staff have positive relationships with young people. They understand the risks to young people's welfare. Staff have helped young people to become increasingly safer. Young people no longer go missing from home. The risks to young people from criminal and sexual exploitation, neglect and harm have reduced significantly.

Staff understand the potential signs of abuse and exploitation. They usually respond appropriately to concerns about young people. However, on one occasion, a member of staff failed to report in a timely way concerns about the manager's interaction with a young person.

The few incidents of challenging behaviour that have happened, have not always been dealt with in a consistent and appropriate way. The lack of detailed guidance for staff in young people's risk assessments and plans means that good practice is not being shared and consolidated. Consequently, young people are not receiving a consistent response that helps them to feel safe and secure. Furthermore, young people's views about the best ways to help them are not included in their plans.

Behaviour management records do not always show the effectiveness of the measure used in promoting positive behaviour or young people's views. The records

are not always reviewed by a manager or used to identify any learning to improve practice.

The kitchen door is locked to prevent young people going into the kitchen at night. The manager and staff have not explored the reasons for young people needing to get up during the night. Likewise, they have not considered other ways of supervising young people when they struggle to sleep. The locking of the kitchen door is a potential hazard to young people's and staff's access to a means of escape in case of a fire.

The employment of staff does not always follow safer recruitment good practice to minimise risks to young people. Leaders and managers have not always investigated gaps in employment and the reasons for the person leaving previous jobs. Appropriate references are not always taken up from organisations that can comment on the person's experience, skills and suitability. Evidence of the person's qualifications is not always obtained.

Leaders and managers

The manager has managed the restrictions during the COVID-19 outbreak sensibly. The manager and staff have placed the well-being of young people at the centre of their practice and decision-making.

Young people's plans have continued to be followed and reviewed regularly. The manager and staff have developed relationships with partner agencies and young people's families. They work together to identify and meet young people's needs.

A permanent staff team has provided care for young people during the COVID-19 outbreak. However, most of the staff team are unqualified and inexperienced. Staff have not had opportunities for good-quality training in all the areas relevant to their roles and young people's specific needs.

The responsible individual and manager recognise that there are weaknesses in practice, staff's knowledge and skills. The responsible individual has taken immediate and robust action to deal with complaints from young people. The responsible individual has identified important areas of learning and development for the manager and staff, including: effective communication and teamwork; training in identifying, recording and reporting of concerns about young people's welfare; building positive relationships with young people; managing allegations; and whistle-blowing.

The responsible individual has taken measures to improve the management oversight and the external monitoring of the home. The external monitoring reports do not include young people's views about the quality of care they receive, or consultation with parents, relatives and professionals working with the young people.

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 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 plans; 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)(ix))	18/10/2020
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— 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;	18/10/2020

understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(v))	
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 work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of 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— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and 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)(b)(c)(f)(g)(h))	18/10/2020
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.	18/10/2020

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)) In particular, improve the quality of the impact risk assessment for new admissions to the home, and source all of the necessary information from the placing authority.	
The registered person must ensure that the privacy of children is appropriately protected; children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	03/09/2020
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— provide adequate means of escape from the home in the event of fire. (Regulation 25 (1)(b)) This relates to the locking of the kitchen door at night, which restricts access to a means of escape from the house.	03/09/2020
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character;	18/10/2020

the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1)(2)(a)(3)(a)(b)(c)(d))	
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 effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and 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")— 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)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	18/10/2020

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2527654

Registered provider: Above And Beyond Residential Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Suite 14, Foundary House, Widnes Business Park, Waterside Lane, Widnes WA8 8GT

Responsible individual: Paul Clarke

Registered manager: Jo-Ann Purcell

Inspectors

Nick Veysey, Social Care Inspector

Natalie Bennett, Social Care Inspector

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