

2529667

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority children's home. The home is registered to care for up to four children at any one time. Children who access this service have additional needs. Some children receive short breaks, while others live here on a full-time basis.

Visit dates: 13 to 14 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 11 September 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 identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Leadership and management are not comprehensively effective.
- The systems in place to ensure children are safeguarded are weak.
- The arrangements for medicines remain an ongoing concern.

The care of children

During the current pandemic this provision has remained open. Several children were supported to access respite care. This included children who would not ordinarily attend this provision. In addition, some shielding families received care in their own home. This provided the children and their families with much-needed support.

Children have improving health due to support they get during their stays. For example, one child suffered with stomach issues and took medication. They no longer need medicine. Another, who was unable to use the toilet, is more confident and independent.

Records for children are weak. They do not always provide staff with enough information to direct them in how to provide the required care for the children. Boundaries and expectations for some children are unclear.

The safety of children

There is a failure to fully adhere to safeguarding policies and procedures. Management responses in respect of bruises found by staff on children are poor. This leads to a failure or a delay in escalating potential safeguarding concerns. This is a repeated shortfall.

Not all risks for children are fully understood by the staff. Direction from leaders and the records they produce are weak. As a result, staff do not know when they should act to protect children from harm.

The arrangements to safely manage medication are not effective. Despite extensive auditing, training and discussions with staff, errors continue. There are three recent incidents when medication could not be accounted for. On one occasion, there was confusion in respect of controlled medication. Managers failed to act to understand the whereabouts of the medication. This is a repeated shortfall.

Leaders and managers

Leaders and managers have not addressed shortfalls identified at previous inspections. Requirements made at the last inspection have not been met. These areas remain of concern. As a result, poor and concerning practice continues.

Leaders and managers do not have effective oversight of the day-to-day running of the home. A lack of clear direction and a dependence on shift leaders mean that children receive inconsistent care.

Leaders do not always take effective action when there are concerns about practice. For example, staff failed to follow the care plan in respect of one child. This left the child without the support they required. The manager failed to see the seriousness of this and did not formally address this with the staff.

Not all staff receive regular and meaningful supervision. The quality of supervision is variable. Some practice issues are not robustly addressed. For some staff, there are no agreed action points or monitoring processes put in place.

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 protection of children standard (1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (i) 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; (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe; (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; (v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and (vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; (b) that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; and (e) that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. In particular, ensure management oversight is robust, identifies worries and concerns in a timely way and that managers act to ensure children are safe.	06/11/2020

In addition, ensure staff fully understand safeguarding policies and procedures and that they raise concerns immediately with managers. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(e))	
The leadership and management standard * (1) The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (a) 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; (b) ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; (d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; (f) 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; (g) demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— (i) research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and (ii) feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and (h) 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)(d)(e)(F)(g)(i)(ii)(h))	15/12/2020
The care planning standard (1) The care planning standard is that children— (a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home In particular, ensure that childrens' records are clear about managers' expectations in respect of day-to-day care. (Regulation 14(1)(a))	06/11/2020
Medicines	06/11/2020

(1) The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home.

In particular, ensure that records are monitored quickly by managers and that they act when there has been an error. In addition, ensure staff understand what is expected of them and when they need to escalate a concern to their managers.

(Regulation 23(1))

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2529667

Registered provider: Devon County Council

Registered provider address: Devon County Council, Chief Executive's Directorate, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4QD

Responsible individual: Glenn Lobb

Registered manager: Clare Gilmour

Inspector

Tracey Ledder, Social Care Inspector

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