

2530253

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home which is registered to provide care for up to five children and young people. The manager has been registered with Ofsted since August 2019.

Visit dates: 3 to 4 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 12 November 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be good

Information about this visit

Due to the 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

Children enjoy excellent, trusting relationships with the adults who care for them. Although there have been several changes to the staff team during lockdown, this has not affected the consistency of care. Staff have supported one child to successfully move into a foster placement, and others are making significant progress from their starting points. There have been no admissions during lockdown, which has enabled children to thrive and flourish in a safe and nurturing environment.

Staff have ensured that family time has continued throughout lockdown. As restrictions have eased, staff have worked collaboratively with professionals to enable face-to-face time to take place. Staff have ensured that family time can, on occasion, be linked with children's activities in the community. This supports children's well-being and a sense of identity.

Staff work closely with the provider's clinical psychologist. This has significantly contributed to children's progress by providing a supportive environment with clear boundaries and expectations. A social worker said: 'The overall change in behaviour is down to the staff team and management. They are switched on to his needs. They have massively contributed to his overall progress, well-being and safe care.'

Placement plans capture the likes and dislikes of the children. Staff listen to the children and creatively display their requests, linked to rewards, on a wall chart. This enables the children to understand their progress and positive behaviour.

The manager and her staff work proactively with education professionals. There are clear lines of communication that have led to excellent outcomes for children during the COVID-19 pandemic. The manager advocates strongly on behalf of the children.

The safety of children

Staff help the children to understand risk and how to stay safe. Children are helped by high staffing ratios that enable them to be well supervised and supported as outlined in their care plans.

The staff follow clear and simple strategies to reduce risk, inclusive of government guidelines in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the lockdown, a period of isolation for precautionary reasons was implemented for a child due to suspected exposure to the virus.

Staff help the children to take part in a range of physical activities. The location of the home and the extensive garden area give the children safe areas where they can play. Trips to activities further afield, including skate parks and local junior football clubs, are risk assessed in line with COVID-19 government guidelines. Staff explain safe care to children, which contributes to their risk awareness, emotional well-being and confidence.

Staff continue to access training. The majority has been online and focused on safeguarding children.

Leaders and managers

All the requirements raised at the last inspection have been met.

Throughout the COVID-19 restrictions, the manager worked collaboratively with a range of professionals and with parents to help children through the lockdown and during the easing of restrictions.

Staff benefit from regular supervision, which is reflective and comprehensively considers the needs of the children. The staff are working well as a team and share a mutual desire to provide the best outcomes for children.

The manager is leaving, but the leaders have responded quickly to find a suitable replacement from within the provider group. Managers and leaders ensure that children are made aware of changes in advance to help them deal with their feelings of loss.

The manager ensures that the care provided to children is scrutinised by an independent visitor each month. This takes into account the views of children and other stakeholders. One example is from an in-depth discussion with the foster carers of a child who left the home to live with them. They commented: 'The young person received the most amazing scrap book, which celebrated his time within the home and provided him with amazing memories.'

The manager has completed a quality of care review within timescales. However, she has not completed a clear action plan for the next six months. This may limit the development of the home and outcomes for children.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strengths and possible weakness in the home's care, which will be captured in the written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next six months of delivery within the home and how these actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2530253

Registered provider: Right-Trak Limited

Registered provider address: Winovation, Houghtons Yard, Shields Road,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 2YP

Responsible individual: Melanie Spriddell

Registered manager: Angela Riddell

Inspector

Michael Dack, Social Care Inspector

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