

2531755

Registered provider: Sandcastle Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated and managed by a private company. It provides care and accommodation for up to three children who may have social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2023. At the time of the inspection, there were three children living at the home.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 June 2023

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: 14 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/03/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
09/03/2022	Full	Good
24/02/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Children's progress and experience of care in this home is undermined by an inconsistent approach to implementing boundaries. Significant changes at an organisational level, and to the staff team, have created instability and confusion among the staff. Despite there being a committed manager and staff team, a solution has not yet been found to address the issues that are affecting the quality of care for the children.

There are significant flaws in boundary setting that is undermining the children's care. Boundary setting is inconsistent and disjointed. This means that children are receiving mixed messages from the manager and the staff team. This issue increases the risk of children becoming more agitated.

Partnership working with the children's network of professionals is generally good. However, in one instance, the manager's challenge has failed to address several shortfalls with the practice of a specific local authority. The manager has not escalated his concerns through the necessary channels. This has contributed to there being significant delay in resolving important care planning issues for a child.

The home is a nice environment for children to live in and enjoy. Children's bedrooms reflect their personality and interests. However, although the manager has a plan to address several maintenance tasks that need attention, he has not reported all necessary repair and improvement works.

Staff compile child-friendly care plans that are relatable for the children. The children's plans are personalised to reflect their interests. This creates a sense of individualism and encourages the children to be involved in their care planning. However, some important goals from the child's statutory care plans are not reflected in the home's care plan for the child. This oversight prevents the manager from being assured that the staff consistently focus on the important issues that the child needs support with.

Staff support the children to improve their relationships with important family members. However, the manager does not attempt to learn about, and work together with, other significant people involved in the children's life. This is a missed opportunity to develop and increase the children's support networks.

Children have confidence to join community clubs and access their local community for leisure purposes so that they can pursue their individual interests and passions. Staff are proud of the children's achievements, and they provide morale support to encourage the children to succeed.

Staff provide a good level of practical and emotional support to ensure the children access education. For some children, this has resulted in them regaining a sense of focus when they have experienced significant gaps in their education. Therefore, children believe that they have a future to aspire to.

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

Children's risk management records are inconsistent. Not all of the staff have a clear understanding where to record significant events that involve the children. Consequently, the children's daily written records sometimes contradict information noted in other written records, such as incident reports. This dilutes the manager's confidence when relying on the children's written records for information.

Staff restrain the children when they need to prevent significant incidents from escalating. However, the staff do not respond consistently to children who are in an agitated or distressed state. Consequently, the children are experiencing a confused and inconsistent level of care in times of crisis.

When children go missing from the home, the staff report this to the police. However, in one instance, the child's written records evidence poor lines of communication between the staff and the police. This contributed to a child's missing-from-home episode being unnecessarily prolonged.

Staff follow and implement the children's clear risk assessments, and the manager anticipates risk well, particularly around the use of specific restraint techniques. However, the division in the staff team around agreed care practices undermines the team's ability to effectively reduce identified risks associated with the children's known behaviours.

Some of the language used in the children's written records is ambiguous and not helpful for children. This limits the staff's ability to be clear on what and how they will support the children to become increasingly safe.

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

The manager is new in post and has brought stability to the team. However, the manager has struggled to combine administrative tasks and oversee the children's care. Additionally, in the absence of an out-of-hours support system that is equitable, the manager provides this additional support.

The manager values the support from his service manager. However, the support that the new manager has received from senior leaders has been limited. The manager has not had a meaningful induction, and there is a lack of recorded evidence to confirm that the manager has received formal supervision sessions. This oversight prevents the organisation from being assured that the manager is supported sufficiently to care for children effectively.

The manager is committed and provides additional support to the children outside of his designated working hours. On one occasion, this has undermined the decision-making of the staff in setting boundaries for the children. This practice dilutes the influence and accountability of individual staff members in the manager's absence.

Senior leaders have not given the manager clear guidance. Consequently, opportunities to encourage better team cohesion and improve staff performance have been missed. New members of staff have not received a structured induction. In addition, not all staff are effectively supported with their professional development. All in all, these issues reduce team cohesion, stifle staff development and reduce the staff's ability to manage a safer home environment.

The home is not delivering care as outlined in its statement of purpose. The statement of purpose refers to a different therapeutic model that is being applied in practice. This disparity reflects the most pressing issue in the home, staff have differing views associated with the concept of therapeutic care.

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 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; 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— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; 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)(e)(f)(g)(i)(h))	15 July 2023

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— that each child's relevant plans are followed; 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)(c)(d))	15 July 2023
The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (3)(a) (5))	15 July 2023
The registered person must— ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction. The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development. (Regulation 33 (1)(a) (4)(a))	15 July 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of their children. They will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. In particular, the registered person should report all repair work and consider hanging children's bedroom doors without weight bearing self-closures that also meet fire regulations. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

- The registered person should ensure that where the placing authority or another relevant person does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, the home must challenge them to meet the child's needs (see regulations 5(c)). Staff should act as champions for their children, expecting nothing less than a good parent would. The registered person should consider the use of an independent advocate (see paragraph 4.16) if the child's needs are not being met. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)
- The registered person should ensure that the responsible individual supports and supervises the management of the home as set out in the definition of a responsible individual in regulation 2. They should have an understanding of both effective practice in responding to the needs of looked-after children and of local authority care planning duties and how children's homes are required to support these. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 60, paragraph 12.3)

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: 2531755

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Sandcastle Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Sandcastle Care Ltd, 49 Whitegate Drive, Blackpool
FY3 9DG

Responsible individual: Claire Holtby

Registered manager: James Agus

Inspectors

Steve Guirey, Social Care Inspector

Gail McGann, Social Care Inspector

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