

2540658

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a private company. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children. The home specialises in caring for children who may have been, or who are, experiencing emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The manager was registered with Ofsted on 14 August 2020.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 17 March 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Inadequate

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/or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Children are not kept safe by staff.
- There is poor risk management, and there are failures by the manager and staff to address significant risk-taking behaviour.
- The responsible individual and manager are not leading the home in a manner that is consistent with the aims outlined in the statement of purpose.
- The manager is not gathering and evaluating all the available information to show that the home can respond effectively to children's assessed needs and the placing authority's plan.
- Children do not receive effectively planned care and have not had a positive experience living in the home, and of moving on from the home.
- Children are not provided with suitable daily routines and structure to help them make positive changes.
- Children are not taking part in education, reducing their opportunities to reach their potential.
- The manager does not notify Ofsted of serious concerns about the safety of children.

The care of children

This children's home was judged inadequate at the visit on 17 March 2020. Following the inspection, the responsible individual made the decision to close the home.

After the responsible individual informed Ofsted of the intention to accommodate children again, a monitoring visit took place on 12 August 2020. The outcome of the monitoring visit was that the responsible individual and manager were in a position to start to plan to offer a home to children.

Since the last inspection, only one child has lived in the home. This was from 15 October 2020 to 3 December 2020. The child moved from the home because the manager and staff did not have the knowledge, skills, training and confidence to meet the child's assessed needs effectively and protect him from significant harm.

The planning for the child's care was poor. The manager failed to explore and evaluate all the available information about the child's assessed needs and risks before agreeing to care for the child. The manager's assessment failed to demonstrate that staff had the expertise to respond effectively to the child's assessed needs and the placing authority's plan.

The child did not move from the home in a positive way. The child did not have the information to help him understand why he was moving. He was angry and distressed and left the home without his personal belongings. The manager failed to plan and carry out the move with the placing authority effectively.

The child said that he gets on with staff. Staff listen to the child's views and advocate on his behalf. They have helped the child to understand the reasons why his wishes and feelings cannot always be followed.

However, staff have struggled to build trusting and secure relationships with the child. Therefore, the child was not able to develop a sense of belonging and did not feel able to accept staff's help and support.

The child does not have the necessary structure and routines to meet his needs and promote his development. Staff are unable to encourage the child to take part in education or informal learning. The child spends most of the time in his bedroom or away from the home. Staff also are unable to encourage the child to follow his care plan, advice about COVID-19, his youth offending order and the conditions of a Deprivation of Liberty Order.

The safety of children

The manager and staff have failed to keep the child safe. They have failed to implement the restrictions placed on the child in line with a Deprivation of Liberty Order. They have failed to identify and use effective strategies to minimise the child's risk-taking behaviour, including going missing from the home and alcohol misuse. This has placed him at risk of harm from criminal exploitation and involvement in county lines.

The manager does not ensure that every risk identified in the child's plan is assessed and effective management strategies put into practice. They have failed to identify effective measures to support staff in managing the risks associated with the child's use of mobile phones. For example, after receiving a call on his mobile phone in the early hours of the morning, the child went missing from the children's home.

The manager fails to continually and actively assess the risks to the child and the arrangements in place to protect him effectively. The manager does not review and evaluate serious incidents, including when the child has gone missing from the home, and the effectiveness of risk assessments and management plans. The manager fails to identify new strategies when the existing measures are not managing the risk to the child. This is not protecting the child adequately.

The manager and staff identify risks and serious concerns about the child's welfare. They take appropriate action when the child is missing from the home. They work well with the placing authority and the police to find the child.

However, the manager has not notified Ofsted of serious concerns about the child's safety. This includes all the times the child was missing from the home and the child was considered to be at serious risk of harm from criminal exploitation and alcohol misuse. This failure to share information compromises the safety and welfare of the child because the regulator is unable to carry out its monitoring function to ensure that appropriate action is taken by the manager and staff to safeguard children.

The responsible individual and manager do not keep detailed records of the recruitment checks that they make to ensure that a person is suitable to work with children. When they have concerns, they do not complete a written assessment of the issues, what they have done in response and the reasons for the decision they have made about the person's suitability.

Leaders and managers

The responsible individual and manager have failed to implement changes that ensure that children are protected and have their needs met effectively. They have not made the necessary improvements to the arrangements for the protection of children, care planning and leadership and management identified at the last full inspection.

The responsible individual and manager are not leading and managing the home in a manner that is consistent with the aims outlined in its statement of purpose. They are failing to inspire and develop a culture that supports children to be safe and reach their full potential.

The child remains at a high risk of significant harm because the manager and staff have failed to put into practice the child's plan and Deprivation of Liberty Order. The failure to manage or reduce significant risk-taking behaviours and safeguarding concerns and the child's lack of engagement with staff and support services are compromising the child's safety and well-being.

The manager recognises that the home is unable to keep the child safe and has escalated his concerns to the responsible individual and placing authority. However, the serious risks to the child's welfare remain.

Care planning, risk management and behaviour management in the home are not effective. The responsible individual and manager have failed to provide effective management oversight of the child's care. They have failed to identify and address these shortfalls. Likewise, they have not made sure that all the actions from the fire safety risk assessment have been completed.

The child has not been consulted regularly about his views about the home's care by the independent person carrying out the external monitoring of the home. This is limiting the organisation's understanding of the impact of the quality of care on the child's life and ability to identify improvements in caring for the child.

The responsible individual and manager have not made sure that staff have the knowledge, skills and training to meet the needs of the child. Staff have not had training in behaviour management and restraint, managing alcohol and substance misuse, and managing risks from social media, the internet and technology.

The responsible individual and manager have failed to provide the child with the level of staffing and continuity of care that he needs. Staff rotas do not demonstrate that the agreed number of staff supported the child every day.

The requirements made at the last inspection in relation to medicines and behaviour management records were not evaluated at this assurance visit. Therefore, these requirements remain in place and will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally;	22 January 2021

help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible; help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(viii)(x))	
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; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful; help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship; are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to	22 January 2021

the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; and that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(x)(xi)(b))	
*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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare; and 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; that the effectiveness of the home’s child protection policies is monitored regularly. Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii) (vi)(b)(e))	22 January 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—	22 January 2021

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 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)(e)(f)(g)(i)(ii)(h))	
*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. 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; that arrangements are in place to— ensure the effective induction of each child into the home; manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and	22 January 2021

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 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)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(d))	
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23 (1)) This requirement remains in place from the last inspection.	22 January 2021
If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(1) applies to the home— the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)(b)) In particular, ensure that the actions identified in the fire risk assessment are completed.	22 January 2021
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; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualifications and skills for the work that the individual is to perform;	22 January 2021

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)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c)(d)) In particular, ensure that there is a record of the outcome of enquiries made to verify written references and to follow up concerns identified in the recruitment process that may affect an applicant's suitability. When concerns have been identified a risk assessment should be completed of the applicant's suitability, including the reasons for the decision made about their suitability.	
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ('the behaviour management policy') which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. 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 name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ('the user'), and of any other person present when the measure was used;	22 January 2021

the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; 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 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) This requirement remains in place from the last inspection.	
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))	22 January 2021
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that the records include a copy of the staff duty roster of persons working at the home, a record of the actual rotas worked, and a record of any persons who work at any time at the home.	22 January 2021
*The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—	22 January 2021

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))

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2540658

Registered provider: Tressell Homes Ltd

Registered provider address: Unit 41, Price Street Business Centre, Price Street, Birkenhead, Cheshire CH41 4JQ

Responsible individual: Julie Collins

Registered manager: James Dawson

Inspector

Nick Veysey, Social Care Inspector

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