

2541467

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a charity, and provides care and support for up to four young people who can no longer live at home.

The registered manager recently resigned from their post. A new manager is in place and has applied to Ofsted to be registered.

Visit dates: 8 to 9 December 2020

Previous inspection date: Not previously inspected

Previous inspection judgement: Not previously inspected

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 did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Young people enjoy trusting relationships with staff. As a result, they are making progress and their emotional well-being has improved. This is because they are more able to talk to staff about how they are feeling.

Staff take the time to get to know new young people who move into the home. One young person said, 'It is the best place ever and I'm never leaving.'

Staff understand the young people's needs and the things that are important to them. They work effectively with a range of external professionals to ensure that young people receive effective care and support.

Education has been problematic for some young people as they have struggled during the lockdown period. Staff are working with the young people to ensure that they can access the right education placements to help them to move on with their learning.

Young people have kept in regular contact with their family and friends throughout the lockdown period. Some young people have struggled during this period and have continued to go out to see their friends. Staff have spoken to them about why the restrictions are in place to help keep the young people and others safe.

The safety of children

Staff know and understand the diverse needs of the young people and the associated risks for them. Staff are able to speak confidently about the measures in place to keep them safe.

Most young people feel safe and have a sense of belonging. They know that they can talk to the staff about their worries and that the staff will help them to be safe.

There are some incidents of young people going missing from the home. Staff take effective action to try to locate the young people and ensure that all professionals and parents are notified.

Staff are aware of the impact that COVID-19 has had on some young people's emotions, anxieties and behaviours. Staff have provided consistent messages to young people and have arranged for additional support to help them through this time of uncertainty.

Recruitment practice is not safe and does not minimise the risks to young people. This is because the person verifying the references does not have all the pertinent information to verify the reference effectively.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager has recently resigned in order to take up the role of the responsible individual. A new manager has been in post since February 2020 and has submitted her application to register with Ofsted.

During this period, due to the setting up of a new children's home, there has been an increase in the number of 'managers' in the home. Staff say that this, in addition to the COVID-19 restrictions, has led to some confusion as to who is in day-to-day charge of the home.

New staff have not received training in several areas, including: physical interventions and behaviour management; safeguarding; medication and self-harm. Consequently, they may not have the knowledge and skills to meet young people's needs.

Young people's case records and documentation are not easily accessible and do not clearly demonstrate the young people's progress or tell the story of their time at the home.

Young people's information is stored in a wide range of online documents, which makes it difficult to access specific information. Safeguarding records are not immediately available as only specific people have access to them.

Records and documentation are not always updated following significant incidents. Risk assessments are weighty documents; some are up to 50 pages long. These do not reflect the current risks for young people, such as child sexual exploitation and pregnancy. Care plans do not demonstrate the healthcare needs of the young people.

Furthermore, agency staff do not have access to the online records and are reliant on the verbal handover from staff. This does not promote the health, safety and well-being of young people.

Staff say that the amount of paperwork that needs to be completed daily is having an impact on the amount of time that they can spend with young people. The new manager and deputies have identified these issues and are taking steps to rectify the shortfalls.

Monitoring by the leaders and managers is not sufficiently robust. The six-monthly monitoring report for the home does not reflect what has changed as a result of consultation with others or provide a clear analysis of what the home does well and the areas for improvement. Furthermore, Ofsted has not received a copy of the report.

Social workers and parents are complimentary about the home. They say that the staff work hard to keep young people safe and inform them of the young people's progress and any emerging concerns.

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 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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(b)) This relates to the staff ensuring that the young people's risk assessments are current and that they reflect their current needs. Also, the procedures for verifying references for new employees.	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.	22 January 2021

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 have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for 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. 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)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h))	
The registered person must ensure that the following items, which may be kept in electronic form, are kept in an accessible manner— children’s case records (see regulation 36). (Regulation 38 (i))	22 January 2021
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— 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	22 January 2021

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))	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (4)(a) (5))	22 January 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about a child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. The home's records on each child provide a significant contribution to their life history. In particular, records should be easily accessible to young people and tell the story of their time in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraphs 14.4, 14.5)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2541467

Registered provider: Barnardo Services Limited

Registered provider address: Barnardo House, Tanners Lane, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1QG

Responsible individual: Stuart Ainge

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Chris Scully, Social Care Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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