

2547611

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services (2) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home was registered with Ofsted in June 2020. It provides care for up to five children who have experienced trauma that has left them with social and emotional needs. The home is privately owned and forms part of a large social care organisation which offers education and therapeutic support.

There has been no registered manager since August 2022. A manager has been in post but did not submit an application to register. The organisation is currently recruiting for a new manager.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 December 2022

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: 19 May 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/05/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

The registered manager and some key staff have left the home during this inspection period. This instability has impacted negatively on some of the children's experiences and on staff morale. Senior leaders recognise these concerns and are taking action to address them. However, these instabilities and the absence of a registered manager impact on children's overall experiences and progress.

Five children live in this home. Since the last inspection, two children have moved in and one has moved out. Children have well-planned moves and careful matching ensures that children's risks are fully understood. Children who are new to the home settle quickly and develop strong and trusting relationships with staff. Children say they like living in the home and they have trusted people they can talk to.

A team of therapists is employed to work in the home. They work closely with staff to ensure that they understand children's needs and provide appropriate and effective care. For example, therapists and staff regularly review children's progress and set targets in line with their needs. This specialist oversight means that children receive good-quality and well-informed care.

Managers and staff work with clinicians and other agencies to understand children's complex needs and to ensure children's emotional needs are met. When a child needs additional support for their physical health, this is quickly sought. As a result, children's holistic health needs are met and their health improves.

Children's education is a priority. When children do not have a school place, managers advocate strongly for them to be allocated one. Staff then work with teachers to support children with their education. Staff are creative in overcoming children's barriers to learning, for example, by using daily activities such as shopping and baking to help children to learn. This means that children enjoy learning, and they continue to progress at school.

Staff support children to develop their hobbies and interests. Children enjoy a range of activities and enjoyable experiences, such as going on holiday, special trips out and planting flowers with staff. Staff produce a newsletter of these experiences with photos and personalised messages. Having a record of these positive memories increases children's sense of self-worth and their resilience.

Staff support children to participate in day-to-day routines and more complex aspects of their care. For example, children take part in regular house meetings to make decisions about activities, decorating the home and choosing their meals. When the time is right, staff support children with skills for independent living. In addition, staff support children to write and review their internal plans. This provides children with a sense of ownership and responsibility for their care.

Staff have positive relationships with children's families. They have a good understanding of family dynamics and why these relationships are important to children. This supports children to stay in touch with important individuals in their lives. As a result, children's emotional well-being improves and they retain a sense of identity with their families.

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

When children show complex behaviours, staff use their strong relationships to help children to calm. They follow children's risk assessments and only use physical restraint as a last resort. Following an incident of restraint, staff and children have in-depth debriefs and managers consult with clinicians to help them to identify patterns in children's behaviours and to identify trends. This means that staff become increasingly knowledgeable about children's risks and how to support them.

On occasions, managers fail to complete the record of physical restraint. They also fail to record who has debriefed staff. This compromises independent oversight and children's safety.

Managers and staff do not always follow systems to ensure the safe administration of medication. Managers assess staff competency to administer medication, however, some of these assessments are out of date. Staff do not always follow procedures for booking medication into the home.

The manager liaises appropriately with the local authority designated officer and social workers, sharing details of all incidents involving concerns about staff practice or allegations. This ensures that there is independent oversight to keep children safe. Managers then conduct thorough investigations and ensure that learning from allegations is used to improve staff practice and to further protect children.

Staff educate children about being kind to others, through planned discussions and day-to-day conversations. They address any poor behaviour in an appropriate and supportive way with children. This helps children to be tolerant of others and to build positive relationships with other children and with staff.

Staff do their best to ensure children's safety online. For example, the manager has a monitoring system to ensure that children's electrical devices are checked regularly to keep them safe. This reduces the risk of children being exploited and being exposed to inappropriate material.

Managers ensure that staff, including agency staff, are safely recruited.

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

Management arrangements are not stable. The home has been without a registered manager since August 2022. The acting manager was the deputy manager, and has been in post since this time. However, the acting manager does not intend to apply to register with Ofsted. At the time of the inspection, senior managers were in the process of recruiting to the post of manager to bring greater stability to the leadership of the home moving forward.

The manager has good partnership working with professionals, including police and social workers. A social worker told the inspector that communication from managers and staff is good and that they are strong advocates for their child. The social worker said that their child had 'come on leaps and bounds' since living in the home.

A group of core staff offer a consistent presence in children's lives, however, this is not enough. Current staffing arrangements fail to provide children with consistent care, due to staff vacancies. Inspectors found that children had been cared for by ten different cover staff over a four-week period. This compromises children's ability to develop positive and healthy relationships with familiar adults who know them well. This also impacts on children's care. For instance, one child travels a long distance with unfamiliar staff to spend time with their family.

Overall, staff receive regular good-quality supervision, which includes discussions about safeguarding and the needs of children. New staff receive more frequent supervision and a planned induction. However, the inspection identified that recent upheavals in management have affected the frequency of staff supervision. This means that managers are unable to consistently assess whether staff develop their skills and understand their roles and responsibilities in providing care to children and how to keep them safe.

Managers do not keep an accurate record of which staff have worked in the home and when. This compromises managers' accountability for the safety and well-being of children.

Children know how to make a complaint and are confident to do so. Managers ensure that complaints are investigated and that children are consulted and are happy with the outcome. This open and transparent approach helps children to feel safe.

Managers continuously review the quality of care that children receive. They submit detailed reports to the regulator and set targets to ensure ongoing improvements.

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— 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(d)(e)) This relates to managers ensuring that there are sufficient staff to provide children with continuity of care and to meet children's needs.	22 January 2023
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 the registered person must ensure that— a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(c)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that staff competence to administer medication is assessed in line with the medication policy and that staff immediately record children's medication when it is brought into the home.	22 January 2023
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if—	22 January 2023

there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and the registered provider— is an organisation or a partnership; does not satisfy regulation 28; or is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home. If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of— the name of the person so appointed; and the date on which the appointment takes effect. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii) (2)(a)(b)) This relates to leaders and managers ensuring that they appoint a manager who applies to register to manage the home.	
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 2023

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. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(ii)) This relates to managers ensuring that the record of a measure of restraint includes the name of the manager who debriefs staff.	
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)) This relates to managers ensuring that they keep an accurate record of who is working in the home and when.	22 January 2023

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff receive consistent and good-quality supervision. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: 2547611

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services (2) Limited

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton, Greater Manchester BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Post Vacant

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Karen Gillingwater, Social Care Inspector

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