

2547611

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

Assurance 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. The organisation has recruited a new manager, who was due to start in April 2023.

Inspection date: 29 March 2023

Date of last inspection: 6 December 2022

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

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

The care of children

Since the last inspection, four children have continued to live in the home and one child has left the home. This was a positive move for the child and staff supported them to return to their mother's care after living in the home for 15 months. The other children are settled and have made some progress.

Staff ensure that children's wishes, views and feelings are captured well. For example, the quality of the key work that staff complete with children is good. In addition, staff use regular meetings to provide children with the opportunity to share their opinions of the home and the care they receive. Children have produced a question page for new staff prior to them working in the home. This acts as an icebreaker and allows children to be involved in the recruitment process for new staff. As a result, children feel valued and listened to.

Overall, staff support children to attend school and make progress with their learning. Three of the children attend the company's in-house school provision. One child is currently preparing to sit their GCSE exams and stays behind to complete revision sessions. However, one child is currently without an educational provision and has not attended school since November 2022. While leaders in the home are working with the relevant professionals to address this, they informed the inspector that progress had been slow.

The safety of children

Children rarely go missing from the home. Since the last inspection, there has been one incident when a child ran away from an agency staff member while on an activity. Staff responded in line with the child's protocols and immediately informed the relevant professionals. As a result, the child was quickly found and safely returned to the home by the police.

Leaders respond effectively when children make allegations against staff. There has been one incident since the last inspection. Following this, the management team ensured that action was taken to protect the child, in line with the home's policies and procedures. Also, the management team ensured that follow-up action was taken and that advice from external professionals was sought to aid further learning and development. These actions reassure children and promote their safety and well-being.

Staff do not always manage significant incidents with children sensitively. For example, on two occasions, staff have failed to work therapeutically with a child and

their responses have led to the child becoming further distressed. Consequently, on two occasions, physical restraint has been required when it may not have been needed had staff adopted a therapeutic approach and used their learning correctly. Following one incident, the interim manager addressed poor staff practice by putting further training in place. However, other areas of staff development have not been identified in the previous manager's reviews. Inconsistent management oversight of significant incidents means that staff and children do not always learn from their experiences.

Staff have a good understanding of children's plans. This is demonstrated through their overall practice. However, risk assessments do not always contain the correct information around current plans for the children and review dates are not always met. This could pose a risk to children if staff who do not know the children well follow incorrect plans.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

The home has been without a registered manager since the previous manager left in August 2022. The home's responsible individual informed the inspector that a new manager had been appointed and they were due to start in April 2023. In the absence of a registered manager, the responsible individual has worked closely with two different interim managers at different times to oversee the home.

The current management team knows the home's areas for development. For example, they have recognised that inconsistent management systems over a period of time have had some impact on the home's progress. However, they are committed to making improvements to the care that children receive.

The management team's oversight and monitoring of the home continue to require improvement. For example, the systems used by the different leaders have failed to identify gaps in children's plans and shortfalls in staff practice. Also, following an initial review of the records when an allegation had been made by a child, the interim manager failed to identify that staff had carried out a physical intervention during the incident. Consequently, staff had not recorded the intervention effectively. Ineffective monitoring systems do not consistently improve the quality of care for children.

The current manager has taken recent action to provide staff with supervision. These supervision sessions are supportive, reflective and provide staff with feedback on their performance. As a result, staff feel supported by the management team in the home.

The home has a core team of staff who know the children well. While there are a few vacancies in the staff team, this does not impact on the staffing levels to support the current children in the home. A small number of regular agency staff are used to provide children with consistent care.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/12/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
19/05/2021	Full	Good

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; 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; 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)(f)(h)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that they have effective oversight and monitoring of children's risks and staff response to significant incidents in the home. It further relates to the manager's oversight of the quality of care children receive in the home. Leaders must also have clear monitoring and review systems in place to improve practice and understand children's progress and experiences.	3 May 2023
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	3 May 2023

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;

strive to gain each child's respect and trust; and

understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children.

(Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(viii)(ix))

In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff understand and adopt the home's therapeutic model of care in their work with children. Staff should develop positive, respectful and trusting relationships with children and respond appropriately to de-escalate incidents.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are in full-time education while they are of compulsory school age, unless their personal education plan contained in the care plan or other relevant plan states otherwise. The home must aim to support full-time attendance at school unless the child's relevant plan indicates

this is not in their best interests. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.14)

- 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. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: Rhian Hopkins

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector

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