

2548260

Registered provider: Safe Places for Children UK

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care for up to three children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. This home is owned by a private company.

There is currently no registered manager in post.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 18 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **inadequate**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded. The care and experiences of children are poor, and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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Not previously inspected.		
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Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

The home was registered in June 2020. This is the home's first full inspection. The home provides spacious and tidy accommodation for children. At the time of the inspection, only one child was living in the home.

Maintaining consistent and positive relationships with staff has been difficult for children. Consequently, children have not fully invested in their home or made significant progress. Children's views are not routinely gathered to ensure that their wishes and views are understood. There are no positive images in the home to suggest that children have ownership of their own environment. Children do not routinely speak to staff if they are worried about something. Recent changes in the management of the home have seen an improvement in one child investing more time in the home.

Professionals report that inconsistencies with managers have not supported effective decision making for children. A social worker said that she had not been informed of the recent changes in management. Professional relationships are not strengthened to maintain positive working relationships with key stakeholders, such as the police. Communication is working better for some stakeholders who reported more positive working relationships.

Children said that staff are more interested in paperwork and do not invest meaningful one-to-one time to build relationships with them. There are minimal structured key-work sessions to support children, although some discussions do take place. Children do not currently receive structured time to ensure that they are being listened to. Children are supported to understand their ethnic origin and identity.

Children have made minimal progress with their education. Children lack structure and routine to their day. Overall, there is a lack of creative thought around education to enhance the natural curiosity of children to gain a wider understanding of the world they live in. Children who are engaged in education have an insufficient number of teaching hours. Education plans are not routinely updated on children's records.

Children are registered with local primary care services. They have not engaged with cannabis misuse support from external agencies, and there is no information on children's records to indicate that they have received one-to-one support from staff to help address their substance misuse. Consequently, for some children, there has been an increase in substance misuse and one child spent a lot of time in her room smoking cannabis. Children are no longer directly linked to therapeutic support services. Not all children's bedrooms are safe, clean and well looked after.

Children do not form happy and healthy attachments with their peers and staff. Staff have reported feeling scared when children have trouble in expressing their emotions. Children are at risk of bullying from their peers and there is evidence of peer-on-peer coercion with children pressured to go missing and engage in criminal activity associated with substance misuse. Consequently, children do not feel safe in their home.

Some preparation work towards independence is carried out. However, not all children have structured and detailed tasks to improve their development towards their future independence.

Children are encouraged to have contact with their family members. However, care plans and expectations of overnight contact are not in line with the local authority contact plan arrangements, for example when it is specified that children should receive welfare visits by staff during contact. This is important for those children where there are still outstanding local authority assessments on family members and family relationships are still new to the child.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

The quality of care and how well risks are identified, understood and managed, and the support and care provided to help children to become increasingly safe, are inadequate.

All children have risk assessments, but these are not used effectively to support staff to manage the risks presented by children. Risk assessments are not routinely updated. The home's therapeutic model is not clearly implemented by staff to ensure that they have a consistent approach to support children living in the home.

Protocols for children who go missing from the home are confusing and over complicated. Staff do not routinely search for children between the hours of 11pm and 7am. Social workers were under the impression that staff would look for children if they went missing from home. There is an expectation from staff that the police will search for missing children rather than staff conducting initial searches to ascertain the whereabouts and safety of children.

Strategies to manage incidents are not effective. Staff are not confident in managing incidents safely when children are unable to manage their emotions and display aggressive behaviours. When children require support following an incident of violence, staff have reported feeling fearful on shift or have left the job due being unable to respond appropriately. Some staff have locked themselves in the office when children become challenging. This safety plan is an ineffective tool in managing children's behaviour. Consequently, children's behaviour is not managed effectively, and incidents have continued to increase.

Children are not constructively supported to understand risks or build healthy and positive personal relationships. Children form unhealthy attachments with others who present with their own safeguarding concerns. One child leaves the home to

visit another person despite the known risks and high level of concerns associated with criminal activity and criminal exploitation. Staff do not conduct face-to-face welfare checks to ensure the safety of the child. There is insufficient monitoring of risk and safety plans do not support children to be safe.

Children do not have safety plans in place for acceptable use of their mobile devices. Therefore, staff are unable to monitor social media effectively or exploitation of children through mobile phone usage. Consequently, known risks relating to criminal and sexual exploitation are not being reduced.

Children who smoke do not have clear boundaries or acceptable agreements in place to follow the home's no smoking policy. Children are known to go missing from the home when going out to smoke late at night. Children are not helped to develop a good understanding of the consequences of their risk-taking behaviour.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Inconsistent management arrangements have created an unstable and unsafe environment for staff and children. The current interim manager, who has been recently appointed, has had a positive effect on the home and staff feel supported. Recording of information on children's records has seen some improvement, where previous management oversight was not obvious.

Management arrangements are not consistently robust to ensure that a manager is always on duty to oversee practice or offer direct support to staff. There is not always sufficient staff to meet the needs of the children. For example, some weekend shifts are covered by staff lone working when this may not be appropriate.

Staff have reported recent improvements in the management of the home and that they now have regular reflective supervision. Staff have raised concerns, noted in supervision records, of feeling unsafe and sometimes not being able to sleep due to incidents in the home. Temporary measures were in place to increase staffing, but this was a short-term measure. Staff were not informed of contingency measures to reassure them when staffing levels reduced.

Staff have access to some training, but it is not sufficiently specialised to support and understand the risks directly linked to the children they care for. Staff have not had sufficient training linked to criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation and online safety.

Monitoring of the quality of care in the home is not sufficiently robust. Recommendations from external monitoring reports are not routinely actioned in a timely manner. Until recently, the home's statement of purpose was several months out of date.

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, the 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 registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if— 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))	15 November 2021
* 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;	15 November 2021

have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; 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)(v)(vi)(b)(e))	
* 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 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;	15 November 2021

demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— 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)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(ii)(h))	
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; maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training and to maximise the child's achievement; raise any need for further assessment or specialist provision in relation to a child with the child's education or training provider and the child's placing authority; 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 who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment; help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans; and that each child has access to appropriate equipment, facilities and resources to support the child's learning. (Regulation 8(1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(ix)(x) (b))	
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— 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 the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship; that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11(1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(iii)(vii)(b))	15 November 2021
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them;	

engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—

ensure that staff—

ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare;

help each child to express views, wishes and feelings;

help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child;

regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care;

help each child to understand how the child's privacy will be respected and the circumstances when it may have to be limited;

help each child to prepare for any review of the child's relevant plans and to make the child's views, wishes and feelings known for the purposes of that review; and

make each child aware of and, if necessary, remind them of each of the matters in sub-paragraph (d)(i) to (iii);

ensure that each child—

is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support and services that the child receives;

has access to the home's children's guide, and the home's complaints procedure, when the child's placement in the home is agreed and throughout the child's stay in the home; and

is given appropriate advocacy support;

keep the children's guide and the home's complaints procedure under review and seek children's comments before revising either document.

(Regulation 7(1)(a)(b)(c)
(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)(c))

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the behaviour management strategy is understood and applied at all times by staff and must be kept under review and revised where appropriate. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.34)
- The registered person should ensure that the home only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- The registered person should ensure that there is a diverse staff team with a range of interests, skills and experiences. The registered person should lead staff to share those interests, skills and experiences with children to enrich the children's lives. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.6)

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: 2548260

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Safe Places for Children UK

Registered provider address: First Floor, Triad House, Mountbatten Court,
Worrall Street, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 1DT

Responsible individual: Natalie Kennedy

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Kamal Bhamra, Social Care Inspector
Jessica Higginson, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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