

2548794

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home was registered with Ofsted on 2 July 2020. This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five young people with emotional and/or behaviour difficulties.

The registered manager resigned her position in August 2020. An interim manager was appointed on 17 October 2020 and is yet to apply for formal registration with Ofsted. The responsible individual is overseeing the running of the home in the intervening period.

At the time of this assurance visit, there was only one child living in the home, who arrived as an emergency placement and is in care for the first time.

Visit dates: 15 to 16 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 identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Recruitment practice is not safe. The home does not formally record staff qualifications or verify references. Neither the home's owner nor the manager have completed any training relating to safer recruitment.
- An inexperienced staff team lacks formal supervision and the training required to meet the complex needs of the young person in placement.
- The home admitted a young person whose needs fell outside the home's conditions of registration and statement of purpose.

The care of children

Outcomes for young people in the home are variable. Two young people have moved on from the home since its registration. One young person successfully moved on to his own accommodation with staff support. His social worker commented: 'We were happy with his progress in the home.' A second young person's placement ended after three days as the home was unable to meet their needs.

Multi-agency work is effective. Staff are working with several health professionals to implement complex dietary recommendations and monitor weight. The dedication and support of staff is valued by outside professionals, one of whom commented: 'I have found the home to be thoughtful and creative in their provision of care.'

Despite the concerns seen by inspectors, the feedback from outside professionals is generally positive. One social worker commented on the progress achieved by a young person learning how to eat independently and the ease with which her young person settled into the home.

Staff promote young people's safe relationships with their families and friends. This has continued throughout the pandemic through direct contact or online. Parents provided positive feedback about the home.

Independent advocacy is lacking for young people. This has limited young people's understanding of the care-planning process and access to specialist advice and guidance if required. Despite this, staff are proactive on behalf of young people, such as chasing placing authorities to complete assessments of young people's needs.

The safety of children

Restraint practice is not safe. One incident of physical restraint was not recorded in the appropriate format and another was evaluated by the staff member who was involved in the incident. Management oversight of restraint is lacking. Case records failed to record any management debriefs with young people following physical interventions.

Staff training is ineffective. One member of staff with management responsibility has failed to complete training relevant to the complex needs of the young person in the home. This limits their ability to meet this young person's needs effectively or oversee other staff to care for the young person.

The home's statement of purpose does not accurately reflect the staff team's skill base, or the services offered by the home. This limits an assessment of suitability by any placing authority.

Risk assessment practice is mixed. Assessments outline key indicators that may unsettle young people and suggest de-escalation strategies. Less positively, assessments fail to address key risk factors such as the possibility of violence.

Staff recruitment does not meet safe recruitment practice. The home has not obtained a copy of a staff member's qualifications and identification, and references are not verified verbally. This limits a full evaluation of their suitability for the role. In addition, neither the home manager nor the responsible individual have completed any training relating to safer recruitment.

Ofsted was not notified of a recent serious incident involving a young person. This limited the preparation that could be done by Ofsted for this assurance visit and for its risk assessment of the home.

Leaders and managers

Management of the home is ineffective. Following his appointment in October 2020, the home's manager has failed to apply to register with Ofsted promptly. This has limited an assessment of his suitability for this role. The manager has very little management experience, is not receiving supervision from an experienced person and does not benefit from having a deputy manager.

The home has recruited a small, inexperienced staff team. This assurance visit found that there was one inexperienced staff member as the sole 'management' presence in the home at weekends. The staff member concerned had not received any formal supervision since the departure of the registered manager in August 2020.

The responsible individual and the interim manager accept the findings of this assurance visit. They are aware that although the home has only been open for a short time, the concerns that have been noted are grave.

Managers are committed to addressing the requirements and recommendations outlined in this report.

The current workforce development plan lacks detail and any assessment of how managers seek to address the inexperience of the staff and develop their skills and experience.

The practice with regards to admissions of young people to the home is mixed. Managers understand the complex needs of the young person in placement and have limited admissions accordingly. Less positively, the responsible individual previously admitted another young person who fell outside of the conditions of registration. In addition, the home admitted the other young person without ensuring that all members of the staff team had completed the relevant training.

Management recording and monitoring systems are insufficient. Managers do not monitor outcomes for young people effectively. Essential discharge records do not outline where young people are placed on leaving the home. There is no evaluation of how the young people feel on leaving the home. This limits the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the work completed, and to acquire learning that could inform future practice.

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;	1 February 2021

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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)) Specifically, the home must ensure that the staff receive training relevant to the needs of young people.	
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement of purpose ('the statement of purpose') which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (1) (5)) Specifically, the registered person is to ensure that decisions on admissions are made by the home's manager and are in accordance with the conditions of registration.	1 February 2021
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)) Specifically, the registered person is to ensure that an application for registration is issued.	1 February 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, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; 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)) Specifically, the registered person is to ensure the formal verification of all references and obtain copies of all relevant qualifications.	1 February 2021
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (1) (4)(a)(b)) Specifically, the registered person is to ensure that the staff and the manager receive supervision from an experienced person.	1 February 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;	1 February 2021

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))	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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. (Regulation 13 (1) (2)(f)) This is with reference to ensuring that all the outcomes for young people leaving the home are recorded and evaluated.	1 February 2021
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which— are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(b)) This is with reference to ensuring that all incidents of physical restraint are recorded appropriately.	1 February 2021
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (5))	1 February 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person must ensure children have access to appropriate advocacy support, and where possible this should be provided by a person that the child chooses. Children looked after are entitled to an independent advocate to advise them and ensure they have the support needed to express their views, wishes and feelings about their care and lives. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.16)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policy 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)

In particular, ensure that risk assessments address all areas of defined risk, such as violence.
- The registered person should ensure the home has a plan in place to maintain effective management when the manager is absent, off duty or on leave. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce-related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should 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. The Statement of Purpose is an important document in the process of care planning as it sets out the needs of children the home is set up and equipped to care for. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- The registered person must ensure the following elements of the workforce plan should be included in the Statement of Purpose (in accordance with Schedule 1, paragraphs 19 and 20): the staffing structure, experience and qualifications of staff and arrangements for supervision of staff practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.10)
- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.36)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2548794

Registered provider: Seva Childcare Ltd

Registered provider address: 71–75 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London
WC2H 9JQ

Responsible individual: Mahesh Kotecha

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Barnaby Dowell, Social Care Inspector
Tolulope Sawyerr, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

© Crown copyright 2020