

2559317

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by a private organisation. It registered in May 2020 to provide care and accommodation for one young person who may have emotional or behavioural needs.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2020.

Visit dates: 20 to 21 October 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

One young person has lived in this home since it began operating. The young person's social worker spoke positively about his progress and commented that after over 20 placement breakdowns, this is the first period of stability the young person has experienced in several years. The social worker feels that this is due to the young person's positive relationships with staff.

Staff demonstrate an understanding of the young person and the things that are important to him. However, some aspects of the young person's care planning require improvement. For example, the involvement of external healthcare professionals in the young person's care is not clear. Actions required by staff to meet the young person's needs require greater detail, to help ensure that staff are working in a consistent manner.

The young person is not engaging in any formal education or training. It is evident that staff work closely with him in an attempt to understand and overcome barriers to learning. There have been efforts to fill the young person's time with educational activities, which are regularly incorporated into the young person's timetable. The manager has arranged the purchase of online courses in areas that interest the young person, and staff regularly encourage him to take part in these.

The young person enjoys spending time with staff and he benefits from a tailored activity planner which reflects his individual interests and likes. He regularly enjoys trips to places of interest, including museums and historical sites. He attends church on a weekly basis and is part of the church youth club. He is a keen artist and his home is full of art that he has created. He has recently undertaken a furniture upcycling project with staff, which he enjoyed.

Staff describe positive consultation with the young person and are able to give examples of how he is encouraged to make decisions on a daily basis. However, it is not clear within the young person's care plans that his views, thoughts and wishes are considered in a meaningful way. It is important that the young person's voice is heard and reflected in the planning of his day-to-day care.

The safety of children

The young person has some complex needs and there are significant risks associated with his care. Some of these risks have reduced since his admission to the home. For example, the young person rarely goes missing but has a history of doing so in previous placements. However, there are still significant concerns about some aspects of the young person's well-being.

Staff demonstrate an understanding of the risks to the young person and are able to describe some strategies in place to manage these risks. However, there are shortfalls in the risk management process. Risks are not always clearly identified. In some examples, risks are identified but strategies to manage them are unclear. This

could result in inconsistent practice and staff not being fully aware of the actions required to safeguard the young person.

Records of action taken by the manager in response to concerns or safeguarding matters are not always clear. This could lead to inconsistent safeguarding practice because important actions may be missed. Therefore, the young person's safety and well-being could be compromised.

The young person who lives in this home does not go missing from care regularly. However, there have been occasions when he has been away from the home without authorisation for short durations. The young person's missing-from-home risk assessment and protocol require improvement to ensure that staff are fully aware of the potential risks and are clear about the actions that they must take to safeguard the young person if he is missing.

At times, the young person presents some complex behaviours, which can result in him being significantly harmed. Behaviour support plans are in place which provide staff with some guidance. However, this guidance requires improvement to help ensure that staff are able to respond to incidents and support the young person in times of distress, in a confident and consistent way.

Physical restraints do not occur regularly in this home. However, there have been occasions where staff have been required to physically intervene to safeguard the young person. Records of such incidents are completed and monitored by the manager. The manager completes de-briefs with staff following physical interventions, but at times these are done as a group. Providing individual de-briefs would help to ensure that staff feel able to raise concerns.

Leaders and managers

There is a manager in place who was registered with Ofsted in May 2020. He demonstrates a good understanding of his role and a commitment to improving the young person's experiences and outcomes.

The manager continuously reviews the young person's progress and responds effectively to changes in his needs. For example, he has recently reviewed staffing arrangements to ensure that the young person receives safe and effective support overnight.

The young person's social worker expresses confidence in the leadership of the home and reports good communication with the manager and staff. She is confident that the young person benefits from safe, effective and consistent support.

Staff are well motivated and speak highly of managers. They describe a positive culture where they are encouraged to reflect and positively challenge their own and their co-workers' practice. One staff member spoke positively about group de-briefs held at the end of every shift, which she found to be very beneficial.

In discussion, staff were particularly complimentary about the quality of training provided. They described a number of courses specifically tailored to the needs of the young person and spoke positively about the quality of this learning.

Supervision is provided on a regular basis, although at times, the frequency has not been in line with the organisation's procedures. This is particularly the case for new staff or those who work at the home on a casual basis. In addition, formal supervision is not always used effectively to address identified development areas.

Records, including those of significant incidents, vary in quality and do not always provide sufficient information. Managers have recognised that recording and reporting are areas for development and are taking steps to support improvement.

Internal monitoring is not consistently effective. Shortfalls in recording mean that the manager is not able to easily monitor the frequency of significant incidents or any emerging patterns or trends. Actions taken by managers in response to identified shortfalls, concerns or issues raised by the independent visitor are not always clear and fail to demonstrate that such matters have been suitably addressed.

Ofsted has not always been notified about significant events that have taken place. This means that we are not able to monitor the service effectively. As a result, the young person's safety and well-being are not sufficiently promoted.

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 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—	04/12/2020

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. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii))	
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; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(vii))	04/12/2020
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— demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—	04/12/2020

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)(g)(ii)(h))	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a))	04/12/2020
The registered person must compile in relation to the children’s home a statement (“the statement of purpose”) which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1)(3)(a)(b))	04/12/2020
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 concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or	04/12/2020

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 ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (1)(4)(a)(b))	04/12/2020

Recommendations

- Staff should have clear guidance about how to respond to each child's individual behaviour to enable them to manage conflict, maintain constructive dialogue and react appropriately and consistently if challenged by a child in their care. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards, Page 39, paragraph 8.14)
- The registered person must specify the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing from care or away from the home without permission and how staff should support the child on return to the home. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards, page 45, paragraph 9.28)
- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards, page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- Any child who has been restrained should be given the opportunity express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicable, ideally within 24 hours of the restraint incident, taking the age of the child and the circumstances of the restraint into account. Children should be offered the opportunity to access an advocacy support to help them with this (regulation 7 (2)(b)(iii)). ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality

standards, page 50, paragraph 9.60)

- Records of restraint must be kept and should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards, page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards, page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- Any staff member carrying out a supervisory role such as 'shift leader' should have substantial relevant experience of working in a children's home and have successfully completed their induction for the home in which they are employed. Shift leaders should be clearly identified in the home's rotas. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards, page 54, paragraph 10.21)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should:
 - detail the necessary management and staffing structure, (including any staff commissioned to provide health and education), the experience and qualifications of staff currently working within the staffing structure and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the home's statement of purpose;
 - detail the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training (such as safeguarding, health and safety and mandatory qualifications);
 - detail the process for managing and improving poor performance;
 - detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice (see regulation 33 (4)(b)) and keep appropriate records for staff in the home. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards, page 53, paragraph 10.8)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2559317

Registered provider: Omega Care Group Limited

Registered provider address: Castle Chambers, 43 Castle Street, LIVERPOOL L2 9TL

Responsible individual: Alekos Aresti

Registered manager: Paul Seddon

Inspector

Marie Cordingley, Social Care Inspector

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