

2561726

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for one child or young person.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since February 2020.

**Visit dates:** 16 to 17 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 no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

## **The care of children**

The young people benefit from the caring and nurturing environment that the staff give them. Staff ensure that there are consistent boundaries and routines in place. This helps the young people to enjoy trusting relationships with the adults who look after them. The young people are consulted, and their wishes and feelings are listened to and acted on.

One young person has made significant progress during his stay. Consequently, he moved into a placement where he could develop his independence further, and have the experience of living with other young people. Another young person has settled well in the home, although more recently has had a difficult time emotionally. The staff are dedicated to helping her cope with this.

The staff ensured that the young people continued to see their families throughout the COVID-19 restrictions. The manager is a strong advocate for, and supports the young people to have regular family time. When necessary, this has been through video links but is now face to face on a regular basis.

The manager ensures that specialist help is available for the young people. One young person received specialist group therapy. Another benefits from the calming effect of grooming horses and horse riding. The young people benefit from the different ways in which their emotional needs are met.

The registered provider employs a qualified nurse and an educational consultant. These professionals provide advice and guidance to staff, promoting the health and education of the young people.

The young people's care plans describe their wishes and feelings. Staff implement these plans on a daily basis, spending time with the young people, encouraging their individual interests, and giving them appropriate advice and guidance. Consequently, the young people enjoy themselves and learn to make sensible choices.

## **The safety of children**

The young people are kept safe by the high staffing levels in the home. They are supervised and supported in line with their risk assessments and care plans. The staff talk to the young people about improving their socially acceptable behaviour and how to make positive relationships. This has a beneficial impact on the young people's development and progress.

The risks to the young people's safety, such as self-harm incidents, reduce as a result of living in the home. The staff help the young people to understand the guidance in relation to keeping safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. The young people enjoy regular exercise with staff, including bicycle rides, dog walking and horse riding. This helps them keep fit and reduces the impact of any isolation from COVID-19 restrictions.

The staff have undertaken a range of safeguarding training to keep the young people safe. There have been no missing-from-home incidents since the home opened. The use of physical intervention is minimal and is a last resort. The staff talk through these incidents with the young people in an attempt to prevent further occurrences.

### **Leaders and managers**

There is an experienced manager in post, who is suitably qualified. Although she manages another home that is registered for one young person, she maintains good management oversight of this home. She is a strong leader and advocates well for the young people in her care.

During the COVID-19 restrictions, the manager ensured that important parts of the young people's lives, such as their education and family time, continued. She is working collaboratively with partner agencies to ensure that a young person's education plans are reviewed and up to date. One young person does not currently receive full-time education. There are plans for this to start in January 2021.

The staff have undertaken a range of training and receive regular supervision and appraisal of their practice. The manager has introduced a new pay scheme to reward staff achievements. The staff are a cohesive team and share a passion to give young people the best possible care. The manager has faced difficulties with training providers that have been commissioned to support staff to achieve the required care qualification. She has been persistent in finding an appropriate trainer and has developed ways to support staff to obtain their level 3 qualification.

An independent visitor regularly scrutinises the home. This visitor takes account of the views of young people and stakeholders. These views are not consistently obtained each month due to COVID-19 restrictions, but over the year, the feedback from young people and stakeholders has been positive. The manager actions any recommendations made by the independent visitor. This included making a notification to Ofsted after a young person had made an allegation about a member of staff. Although this allegation was appropriately investigated by the registered provider, Ofsted was not informed in a timely manner.

The manager has completed a quality of care review within the timescales and has made good progress in implementing the action plan of this review. This helps ensure that the staff in the home continue to provide good care to young people.

## **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        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there.<br/>(Regulation 40(4)(c))</p> | 31 January 2021 |

## Recommendations

- Children should be in full-time education whilst they are of compulsory school age, unless their personal education plan contained within 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).

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 2561726

**Registered provider:** VCare24 Limited

**Registered provider address:** Unit 18, Becklands Park, York Road, Market Weighton, York YO43 3GA

**Responsible individual:** Victoria Simpson

**Registered manager:** Jean Gordon

## Inspector

Simon Morley, Social Care Inspector

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