

2563216

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to accommodate up to four children with social and emotional difficulties. The home is owned by a local authority, which has eight other homes.

The registered manager has been in post since November 2019.

Visit dates: 3 to 4 September 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

Children enjoy spending time with the staff, and these relationships are positive. A consistent staff team during COVID-19 means that children are confident that the staff are always there to help and support them.

Children keep in touch with their friends and families. During the pandemic, the staff introduced new types of technology to support communication between children and their families. As restrictions are lifted, arrangements are amended so children can safely see their friends and families. This means that children are not isolated.

Children enjoy a range of hobbies, and the staff encourage these interests. The registered manager purchased new games and equipment to help alleviate the frustrations of lockdown. The staff are creative in the planning of fun and educational activities for the children. These new experiences, including holidays, build the children's confidence.

Staff respond effectively to the children's emotional and physical health needs. Staff help the children to understand the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures that are in place to reduce the risk of infection. The staff give the children positive health messages and source specialist health support when necessary. For example, the staff provide the children with information and guidance about drug misuse. This helps the children to understand the impact of poor health choices.

Children are committed to learning. The staff work with education providers to create learning opportunities for children during the pandemic. Clear plans are in place to support the children's return to their education placements in September. This means that children are prepared and ready for learning.

Some children do not experience a planned move into the home. This is because the local authority does not ensure that the staff receive children's placement plans or case records. As a result, the registered manager is not always able to effectively review children's care needs. The impact of this shortfall is reduced because the registered manager arranges post-admission planning meetings with the local authority to obtain relevant information about the child.

The safety of children

Staff have a good understanding of children's risks. This includes the risk of exploitation. Staff work with other agencies, such as the police, to keep children safe and ensure that they receive the help and support they need. Staff regularly review the children's risks and the strategies in place to manage and reduce these. However, they do not clearly record these reviews in the children's case records or detail which risk reduction strategies are still in place.

Staff continue to improve their knowledge and practice. For example, staff have developed their awareness of foetal alcohol syndrome and self-harm. This

knowledge helps the staff to respond effectively to children's distress and means that the staff are able to provide the children with insight into their behaviours.

Leaders and managers do not always ensure that when a child moves into the home their needs are compatible with the needs of the children already living there. On some occasions, this has led to bullying and incidents that have resulted in damage to the home. Consequently, some children have had to move to alternative placements, and this is detrimental to their progress.

The children live in a homely environment. One child said, 'It just looks like any other home'. Although the manager reports when repairs are needed, there is an unnecessary delay in these repairs being actioned by the commissioned maintenance service. The outstanding maintenance issues have an impact on the presentation of the home.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager understands the importance of providing children with consistent care and support. A core team of staff has worked during the pandemic, and this has strengthened their relationships with the children.

The registered manager does not always encourage children to build and maintain appropriate relationships with each other. For example, she allowed a close relationship to develop between two children, without considering the wider repercussions should this relationship end. On this occasion, this led to one child being moved to a new placement. This was not in accordance with the child's care plan.

Children are ambitious, and staff encourage their aspirations. The registered manager and the staff have a good understanding of the children's progress. They create effective plans to help children to achieve their goals. This means that children are aware of their progress and of their next steps to achieve their outcomes.

Children benefit from strong partnerships between the service and other agencies. Virtual planning meetings and consultations are embedded into practice. Children regularly participate in these meetings. This ensures that they can express their views and opinions. However, the registered manager does not comment on the benefits of this consultation in her bi-annual review of the service.

The registered manager supported the external monitoring of the home during COVID-19. The independent visitor has recently recommenced on-site visits to the home. However, reports of these visits lack consultation with children. This reduces the number of opportunities for children to share their views or raise their concerns.

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 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 each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(b)) This is with particular reference to the registered person's consideration of the wider implication of children forming close relationships with each other.	16/10/2020
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. that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(d))	16/10/2020
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.	16/10/2020

(Regulation 14 (1)(a))	
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (1)(2)(a))	16/10/2020
In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (2)(a)(b)(c)(5))	16/10/2020

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2563216

Registered provider: North East Lincolnshire Council

Registered provider address: North East Lincolnshire Council, Civic Offices, Knoll Street, Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire DN35 8LN

Responsible individual: Daren Hale

Registered manager: Rebecca Lamb

Inspector

Jenny Fenlon, Social Care Inspector

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