

2571031

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a small private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The home and the manager were registered by Ofsted in May 2020.

Visit dates: 1 to 2 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

Since the home opened in June 2020 the quality and consistency of care provided to young people have been limited by the number of placements which have ended in an unplanned manner. As a result of this, a number of young people with disrupted care histories have experienced further disruption and change.

The short-term nature of all the placements has meant that there has not been an opportunity for young people to build trusting relationships with the adults who care for them. This has the potential to further impact on their emotional health and well-being.

One young person has recently moved to the home. He told the inspector that he is settling in and feels that his views are listened to by staff. He requested a new bed for his room and this was quickly provided for him. Staff are supporting him to maintain a relationship with his girlfriend and she has spent time at the home.

The lack of continuity of placements means that education has not always been progressed. Arrangements have, however, been put in place in a timely manner for the current young person in placement. He has now started a vocational course of further education which will support his long-term career aspirations.

The home's statement of purpose states that there is an established relationship with the local looked after child nurse which includes visits to young people in placement. This link is currently not in place, which means young people's access to local health resources may be limited.

The safety of children

The home's location presents some challenges for young people who have a history of going missing from care. The home has been unable to keep a number of young people safe in the community, resulting in placements ending in an unplanned manner.

When young people have gone missing, the recording of these incidents is generally thorough. Records indicate that information is shared with all relevant agencies. Staff are not always proactive in their response to young people going missing. In some instances, there has been an over-reliance on attempts to make contact with young people via telephone calls rather than staff actively searching in the community. It is not always clearly recorded if return interviews have been completed after a period of missing from care. The learning from these interviews is, therefore, potentially lost.

The use of restraint in the home has been minimal. Records of restraint are, on the whole, detailed, however, the description of the exact nature of each intervention is not always clear. Recording is sometimes jargonistic. As a result, young people are not always being supported to fully understand what staff are recording about them.

Risk assessments are, for the most part, completed in a timely manner and address all relevant aspects of a young person's care. These assessments are not always dated by the author or signed by the wider staff team. This means that it is not always clear when the assessment was undertaken and which members of the staff team have read and understood the assessment and risk management plans.

Leaders and managers

The home is led by a registered manager who is new to the role. She is supported by two deputies who are also carrying out this role for the first time. The managers are, therefore, developing their understanding of their roles and the expectations on them.

The registered manager has not yet developed internal monitoring systems which will support her to develop and maintain a good quality of care in the home. External scrutiny of the home is provided by the independent person, who visits the home monthly. During lockdown these visits have continued virtually. The resulting reports provide effective support and challenge for the registered manager.

Practice in relation to the assessment and matching of young people prior to admission to the home has not been effective. This has resulted in a high turnover of young people, which is likely to have had a detrimental impact on them.

Staff undertaking their probationary period with the organisation have not always had regular reviews of their practice and progress. As a result, there has not always been robust oversight of the quality of care provided to young people by individual staff. The frequency of this oversight has improved more recently. Supervision meetings are recorded and probationary reviews are now being undertaken.

Due to the home opening during the period of COVID-19 restrictions, all training has been completed online. None of the staff have completed training in respect of the assessment of risk. Not all staff have been trained in the use of restraint. There are currently no arrangements in place for staff to undertake training to care for young people who display sexually inappropriate behaviours, although the statement of purpose for the home states that they will consider young people with these needs. As a result of these gaps in training, staff are not being provided with all the core knowledge and skills in relation to the young people placed at the home or those who may be placed in the future.

Key information provided by the home to external stakeholders is not always correct. In addition, the home's statement of purpose has not been published on the organisation's website. As a result, the nature of the care offered by the home, as well as any agreed input from other agencies, is not always communicated in an open and accurate manner.

The responsible individual has only been employed by the organisation for a short period of time. The new responsible individual has quickly formed a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the home. He has

been proactive in beginning to implement identified changes. As a result, the home now has increased capacity for improvement.

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 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. If a home has a website, the registered person must ensure that a copy of the statement of purpose is published on that website unless the registered person considers that such publication would prejudice the welfare of children in the home. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b)(4))	30/11/2020
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— 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 work as a team where appropriate; 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;	31/12/2020

ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)) Specifically, that all staff receive training in relation to restraint and risk assessments. In addition, prior to a young person being admitted to the home with harmful sexual behaviours, staff should receive training to address these needs.	
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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(h))	31/12/2020

Recommendations

- 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).
- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day to day basis ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5). Specifically, risk assessments should be reviewed and signed and dated by the author and, when read, by the wider staff team.
- 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 Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30). Specifically, missing-from-care records should make clear when an independent return home interview has been requested and when it has taken place. Reasons why an interview was not requested or did not take place should be clearly recorded.

- 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 Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59). Specifically, the restraint should be recorded in a detailed manner in language which is child centred and clearly illustrates the nature of the intervention.
- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraphs 13.2 and 13.3)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2571031

Registered provider: Onextra Care Ltd

Registered provider address: 443 Houldsworth Business Centre, Houldsworth Street, Stockport SK5 6DA

Responsible individual: Lee Isherwood

Registered manager: Yolanda McInnes

Inspector

Dawn Parton, Social Care Inspector

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