

2575713

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This privately run home provides care for up to two children who are in the care of the host local authority and who are unable to be accommodated in either a mainstream residential care setting or a foster placement.

The registered manager left in November 2020.

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 concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- The staff have not provided a risk assessment for a child who is at significant risk of self-harm.
- The staff failed to routinely check a child who is at risk of self-harm. The staff failed to take sufficient action to support the child's mental health.
- The staff do not all have the required training to meet children's individual needs. In particular, they have not accessed training in managing child criminal exploitation, self-harming behaviour, missing from care and substance misuse or anti-ligature training.
- The staff lack the experience and knowledge to meet the children's individual needs.
- The staff lack the experience, knowledge and training to fully meet the home's statement of purpose.
- The recruitment procedures are poor. Some checks have not been undertaken in line with the home's recruitment policy.
- The internal and external managerial monitoring systems and oversight are weak.
- There are significant incidents that have not been notified to Ofsted in accordance with the regulations.

The care of children

At the time of the visit, one child was living at the home. Three children have lived at the home since it registered. One child, who had lived at the home since it opened, has recently moved as the staff were unable to keep them safe. One child stayed for one night as an emergency. One child has recently moved into the home.

An enthusiastic and nurturing staff team builds positive relationships with children. The staff spend time with children and actively seek and act on the children's wishes, when appropriate. The staff help children to understand the COVID-19 pandemic and other significant events.

Children engage in activities that they enjoy, including walking, cycling and cooking. When possible, and in accordance with guidance on COVID-19, the children go to the cinema and take part in activities in the local community. The staff record these activities in memory books for the children to take with them when they move on.

The staff are creative in engaging the children, who may have not been in a formal education provision for a significant time, in their education. The manager liaises with an alternative educational provider to identify individual education packages for

the children. Children's attendance and engagement have increased and, consequently, they develop their self-esteem and confidence.

The environment is welcoming, clean and homely. On moving into the home, children receive an allowance to personalise their rooms. The staff support each child to settle by structuring individual routines, such as bedtime stories.

While living at the home, children continue to keep in touch with their families and people who are important to them. The staff adapt how contact occurs depending on the guidance and restrictions in place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The safety of children

A child who is at significant risk of self-harm has no risk assessment. The risk assessment for a child who is at risk of substance misuse is unclear, and the actions are unrealistic and do not reduce the known risks. Despite the risks to the child, the staff were not provided with substance misuse training. As a result, the child has recently moved out of the home due to the staff being unable to keep him safe.

A child who felt suicidal was not checked by the staff. This is despite the child waking up twice during the night and raising concerns to the staff about his mental health. The staff spent limited time with the child and suggested that he should try to get some sleep and see how he felt in the morning. The staff checked the child once 40 minutes later. There is no evidence that the child was checked again or that the staff took any further action, such as contacting external professionals for advice. This inaction placed the child at significant risk of harm.

The recruitment procedures are not effective. Insufficient recruitment checks were made on some staff members. On one occasion, the organisation said that the referee did not need to complete the reference if they were too busy, and that the organisation would just accept employment dates. This is not in line with the home's recruitment policy. Failure to thoroughly check potential staff could enable unsuitable adults to the work with the children.

The staff care for children with complex and highly challenging needs. However, a child who displays concerning behaviour, such as significant self-harm including ligature, physical aggression and an interest in fire setting, has no behaviour management or placement plan. This fails to provide clear guidance and actions for the staff. This concern is elevated due to the lack of experience and training of the staff. Failure to provide the staff with clear guidance does not enable them to safeguard the child effectively.

The staff implement the missing-from-home procedures and protocol when children leave the home without agreement. The staff take appropriate action and report all known information to relevant external professionals. The staff collect children when they have gone missing from the home and welcome them back into the home. However, the staff do not fully understand why children leave and the associated

risks, such as child criminal exploitation. Therefore, despite the staff's actions, the frequency of these incidents does not reduce.

The staff respond calmly to children's challenging behaviour. There have been no physical interventions. When appropriate, the staff apply proportionate sanctions. The staff seek the views of the children following incidents, so that they can express any concerns.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager has resigned as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The organisation appointed a second manager, who left the organisation following a poor safeguarding decision. The home's current manager is in the process of registering with Ofsted.

The management team admits children in line with the home's statement of purpose. However, the staff team lacks the experience, skills and training to meet the needs of these children. The staff have no previous experience of working in residential childcare. The staff have not received training in supporting children who go missing from care, or training in the use of a ligature cutter or managing substance misuse. Some staff have training in understanding child criminal exploitation. This training is basic and fails to help the staff to protect the child who is at risk. This shortfall is exacerbated by the lack of guidance, plans and risk assessments for the staff to guide them to manage the children's complex needs safely.

The manager's impact risk assessments fail to identify all known risks or the additional resources that are required to meet the child's needs. Therefore, from admission, the child's needs are not sufficiently met.

External monitoring takes place monthly. During the COVID-19 national lockdown period, the monitoring visits were undertaken virtually. Since those restrictions lifted, the independent person has visited the home. However, the independent visitor has failed to identify the shortfalls that were found at this visit. Internal monitoring identifies that some improvements are required in the staff's practice. However, the manager was unaware of the significant shortfalls identified during this visit. Internal and external monitoring are therefore not effective. In addition, Ofsted did not receive external monitoring reports for four months. The manager has not completed and submitted to Ofsted the required six-monthly review of the home. These omissions mean that Ofsted does not have a current and effective overview of the home.

The staff receive regular supervision from the manager. These sessions provide a formal meeting in which the staff and manager can raise concerns. However, the supervision records fail to include the manager's response to staff's concerns, for example, in respect of the children's behaviours. Supervision records also fail to demonstrate how the manager is supporting the staff's personal development.

The manager has failed to inform Ofsted of all significant incidents, such as when the police have attended the home to support the staff following a child's threatening and aggressive behaviour. Lack of notification does not enable Ofsted to have an overview of the events at the home.

The staff spoke with enthusiasm about their roles. They enjoy working at the home and said that the manager and the responsible individual are supportive and approachable. Despite the number of shortfalls, the manager and staff provide a consistent and stable staff team for the children.

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 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm.	5 February 2021

(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(b))* In particular: Ensure that children's risk assessments are in place, implemented, reviewed and updated as is necessary. Ensure that children's behaviour management plans are implemented, reviewed and updated as is necessary. Ensure that the children's impact risk assessments identify the needs of the child and how the home will meet those individual needs. Ensure that the staff undertake the required visual checks on children who at risk of harm. Ensure that all staff working at the home are suitably vetted prior to working at the home.	
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 have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; 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; 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)(a)(c)(f)(h))* In particular:	5 February 2021

Ensure that all the staff working at the home have the appropriate experience, training and skills to meet the needs of the children.

Ensure that, at all times, the home operates in accordance with its statement of purpose.

Notify Ofsted of all significant incidents.

Ensure that the internal and external monitoring of the home are effective.

Ensure that placement plans and behaviour management plans are in place.

Ensure that there is timely and effective supervision of staff.

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2575713

Registered provider: CF Support Services Limited

Registered provider address: 11 Three Rivers Business Centre, Felixstowe Road, Foxhall, Ipswich IP10 0BF

Responsible individual: Joanne Henderson

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Natalie Burton, Social Care Inspector

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