

2575788

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned and managed by a private organisation. It provides care and accommodation for up to three children and young people.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 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 identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Young people have positive relationships with the staff. However, staff have been challenged by some of the behaviours of the young people. Behaviours between young people have been exasperated by the incompatibility of the young people, a relatively new staff team and changes to the staff team. Leaders and managers responded appropriately, resulting in a calmer and more settled living environment where young people begin to make progress.

Young people continue to have time with family and friends. Staff support these visits and social workers report of the positive impact of these visits.

Staff engage well with the young people and make good use of a range of activities available to them. As a result, young people are helped to learn at home and re-engage with education. There is measurable progress for those young people that have not engaged in formal education for a prolonged period.

Young people are supported to take responsibility for their health, and, when necessary, specialist services are accessed to bolster this support.

Young people live in a home that is well organised, providing plenty of space to socialise and have privacy. There have been incidents when the home has been damaged by the young people. Leaders and managers have been swift to repair and replace items, ensuring the young people continue to live in a homely environment.

The safety of children

Young people say they are safe and there are processes in place to support them keeping safe. However, the staff have experienced some significantly challenging periods that are a direct result of the incompatibility of young people living together. This is despite well-planned introductions, risk assessments and comprehensive care plans.

Staff have failed on some occasions to prevent young people from placing themselves at risk. On one occasion, insufficient staffing and no response from the on-call support system, resulted in a newly recruited member of staff requiring police support to ensure her and the young people's safety.

Staff have, on one occasion, failed to prevent one young person from accessing the safe and taking money that ultimately aided a period of going missing from the home. Young people have, on occasion, caused significant damage to the home, threatened one another and assaulted staff.

Leaders and managers have taken immediate action following each incident and introduced measures that have resulted in the reduction of serious incidents, and young people are not going missing from the home. Additional training and support from leaders and managers have resulted in staff being better able to support the young people.

Both young people spoke positively of their improved relationships with one another. An independent reviewing officer and two social workers spoke of their increased confidence in the manager and his staff team to safeguard the young people.

Records are in the main well kept and guide staff on how best to support young people. However, some records lacked management oversight and did not include a sufficiently robust analysis.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager is experienced and has been the manager of this home since it was registered in March 2020. He has led the home through a very challenging period, including staff changes, the COVID-19 restrictions and staff being challenged by the complex needs of the young people.

The registered manager, along with senior leaders, undertakes a good range of activities to ensure young people move into the home well. However, despite introductory visits, and compatibility risk assessments taking place prior to a young person moving in, the manager has been unable to prevent several serious incidents occurring as a direct result of poorly matched young people. It is recognised that a good deal of learning has taken place, and this has resulted in a significant reduction in incidents and an improved admissions process.

External and internal monitoring takes place regularly and informs the development of the home. Well-documented records are kept that evidence the consultation that takes place with young people, commissioners, social workers and family members. Young people spoke positively of how they are kept informed of changes and regularly asked for their views and opinions.

A strength of the registered manager is his ability to reflect, evaluate and analyse records, and to use this to help learn. However, the inspector found several anomalies and missed opportunities of learning across some records. This is a direct result of the registered manager having insufficient time dedicated to the role while supporting staff during a particularly challenging period. Senior leaders have responded to this and are already taking steps to better support the registered manager to address the requirements made following this inspection.

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 leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(2)(c)(d)(e)(h))	06/11/2020
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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iv))	06/11/2020
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.	06/11/2020

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—

that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose;

that arrangements are in place to—

ensure the effective induction of each child into the home.

In particular, the system used when assessing the matching and compatibility of children and young people is robust and ensures their safety.

(Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(i))

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2575788

Registered provider: Park Blue Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Fairfield Lodge, Evenwood, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham DL14 9NH

Responsible individual: Richard Parker

Registered manager: David Gilchrist

Inspector

Linda Bond, Social Care Inspector

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