

2575788

Registered provider: Park Blue Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private organisation. It provides care for up to three children who may have needs associated with social and emotional difficulties, and in addition may have experienced loss, trauma, and abuse. The manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2021.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 3 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 December 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **inadequate**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, and the care and experiences of children are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: not previously inspected

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

At the time of the inspection there were three children living at this home. These children experience a lack of consistency due to numerous carers. Since February 2021, two of the children have been cared for by 19 different members of permanent staff. In addition, numerous temporary staff have been employed either through an agency, as bank staff or staff from the provider's other homes. Opportunities for children to develop trusting and meaningful relationships are limited because of staff turnover.

A social worker said that a child had told them about the number of staff changes and not always having the chance to say goodbye. Social care professionals report on some positive aspects of care provided, although they also raise concerns about disruptive behaviour at night and children spending long periods of time in their bedrooms.

Children's progress and their opportunities and experiences are variable. Too often they are not good enough for children. The staff team plans for social activities and attempts to help children with their learning. Children enjoy the many outings and activities provided. Staff encourage and supported children to pursue their interests. However, more recently two children are increasingly disengaged and spending long periods in their bedrooms.

Not all children have a healthy routine. Lengthy periods in their bedrooms have led to non-engagement with formal learning, missing regular meals and sleep patterns being disturbed. All three children have been awake all through the night on several occasions, causing a disturbance.

The manager and staff team have worked well with other agencies to secure education for the children. One child attends college after successfully achieving GCSE qualifications. Alternative school provision is available for other children; however, their lack of engagement is stalling any progress towards attendance and attainment.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Staff and managers have failed to take effective action to safeguard the children. Several incidents have occurred that have not been managed sufficiently well by staff and consequently there has been a risk to children, staff and people in the community.

Incident reports from September 2021 clearly evidence safeguarding concerns, such as:

- children removing door handles, causing themselves, or staff, to be locked in rooms of the home
- smoke detectors being tampered with and taken down from the ceiling
- items being thrown, causing windows in the home, and a car windscreen, to smash
- children moving traffic cones in the road, near to the home, causing a hazard to motorists
- gaining access to the home's car at midnight, beeping the horn and playing loud music
- children going missing from the home on two occasions, after being disruptive all night
- verbal abuse and physical assaults on staff.

The disruption and upset caused by this failure to manage the children's complex needs has led to staff leaving, allegations requiring investigation, police involvement and a complaint from a neighbour. Since September 2020, the manager has appropriately reported six allegations to the designated officer.

The inspector observed the staff positively interacting with children, and members of staff spoke warmly about wanting to support the children well. However, the children hold the balance of power in the home and are not consistently being helped and supported well enough to engage positively with staff or their social workers. Incidents have occurred throughout the night, when leaders, managers and the staff team are ineffective at disrupting this pattern of behaviour. Recent liaison with the local authority led to a court order to restrict mobile phone use for one child. At the time of this inspection, the court order had been implemented for six days and the level of unsettled behaviour at night was reducing.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leaders and managers have failed to provide children with consistency of care or stability in daily routines. Lack of a stable staff team has contributed to children's inability to form meaningful and positive relationships with those adults who care for and support them. Since October 2020, 12 staff have started and left their employment. These staff members were present for as little as two days, and up to six months.

Leaders and managers ensure that staff receive an induction, relevant training and support to complete residential childcare qualifications. However, three of the six staff have yet to achieve a relevant qualification having passed their probationary period. The manager and deputy are studying a management qualification and three team members already have degree level studies in social sciences.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that suitable employment checks have been undertaken by the agency. This is in stark contrast to the thorough safer

recruitment practices of permanent staff. Information provided by the agency is minimal, with a list of training undertaken for each agency member of staff. The lack of scrutiny and curiosity by leaders and managers has led to four agency staff working at the home without training in the safeguarding of children.

The registered manager and staff have been challenged by the behaviours of the children and they have worked with the other professionals involved. A lack of timely action by leaders and managers to ensure that there is a sufficiently stable and experienced staff group to adequately address children's complex needs has enabled the number of incidents to escalate and/or happen again. Consequently, there has been minimal progress in adequately meeting children's needs, promoting positive behaviour and the level of engagement by two children remains low.

Communication among the staff team is conducted via a social media application. This involves all staff receiving a daily handover via their personal mobile phones. This method of communication fails to protect the privacy of children. In addition, this system does not safeguard children effectively as staff receive and send photos of them through their personal devices.

Generally, records are well maintained in the home, suitably stored, and readily retrieved on request. However, management overview of incident reports lacks suitable analysis. Leaders and managers have failed to identify and implement swift action to prevent situations that pose a risk for children and others and to avoid repetition.

Leaders and managers have responded well to the threat of COVID-19, adopting government guidance about infection control.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; protect and promote each child's welfare; help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect; and help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(v)(vi))	28 January 2022
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.	21 January 2022

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful; strive to gain each child's respect and trust; understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; and that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(viii)(ix)(xi) (b))	
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—	21 January 2022

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; and take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(b))	
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; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to 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	28 January 2022

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)(e)(f)(h))	
The registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected. (Regulation 21 (a)) This specifically relates to staff members using personal mobile phones for work activity.	28 January 2022
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children’s safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children’s home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c)(d)) This specifically relates to the use of agency staff.	21 January 2022

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2575788

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Park Blue Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Fairfield Lodge, Evenwood Gate, Bishop Auckland
DL14 9NH

Responsible individual: Ruth Parker

Registered manager: Emily Reed

Inspector

Clare Davies, Social Care Inspector

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