

2580887

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The manager and the home have been registered with Ofsted since May 2020.

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 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

The staff understand the children's needs. There has been a consistent staff team since the home opened in May 2020. This has enabled the staff to form stable relationships with the children

The staff have enabled the children to keep in touch with their families and social workers. The staff have used technology creatively to enable families to communicate with their children during times of lockdown and social distancing. Physical visits from social workers have recommenced with the ease of lockdown.

Educational support has been provided from the organisation's school to ensure that the children could access learning during restricted educational provision. Two children who recently joined the home have no education placement. However, the manager is working with the placing local authority and the virtual school to ensure that appropriate placements are found. One child is soon to start a vocational course and has been supported well by staff to access this.

The children said that the staff have helped them to understand the COVID-19 pandemic. The staff have provided the children with the personal protective equipment that they need to maintain their safety. The staff provided activities to occupy children during lockdown. Activities took place at the home and in the community when safe to do so.

The staff have not provided one child with the necessities required to live comfortably at the home. The child's bedroom had no curtains at two windows and only net curtains on the remaining windows. Staff had not provided the children with adequate sanitary facilities in two of the bathrooms. This fails to support the children's health needs. Two of the bedrooms had sustained damage that requires repair. In the garden, cigarette ends were strewn on the ground. This does not promote a homely feel and demonstrates that staff have permitted children to smoke in an unassigned smoking area.

The safety of children

A comprehensive risk assessment is in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Visitors have only recently been permitted to attend the home. Robust checks are in place, including the taking of temperatures, prior to anyone being permitted into the home. This keeps the children and staff safe.

One child's placement was ended due to escalating negative behaviours and a high level of risk. Prior to the placement ending, the manager arranged for night-waking staff to support the home. This was a good responsive measure to ensure that safeguards were in place to protect all the children. The staff have been adaptable in their practice in response to challenging behaviours and the restrictions placed on them due to the pandemic.

Episodes of going missing from the home are managed well by staff. Staff work in partnership with the police to ensure the children are returned quickly when missing from the home.

The risk management plans for children fail to capture recent and significant incidents which have included targeted bullying and assault. This prevents staff from having a shared awareness of the risks that the children are exposed to and the measures required to reduce such risks.

The children's risk-taking behaviours have reduced since their admission to the home. Staff understand the children's risks; however, this understanding is not always matched with appropriate action. The children's understanding of risk is variable, and some children continue to present highly challenging and risky behaviours. Some children's risk-taking behaviours are not challenged or addressed adequately by the staff, and this has led to an over-reliance on the police and an unnecessary escalation of violent behaviour at times.

Leaders and managers

The manager was registered in May 2020. The staff team spoke positively about the manager's leadership and feels very supported by her. The manager and the responsible individual have a good oversight of the strengths of the home and the areas that require development.

The responsible individual and the manager demonstrate practice that is informed by research, and they encourage the staff to look beyond behaviours to consider their underlying causes. This promotes the children's well-being and helps them to feel secure.

The responsible individual and the manager have made some revisions to their appointment of an external monitoring provider. This is a positive development. The current independent visitor monitors the progress and well-being of the children effectively. Visits were carried out virtually but have now returned to on-site. The reports are detailed, provide challenge and drive improvement.

The management team has changed one of the training providers as it assessed that training needs could be better met via another provider. This demonstrates that the management team has a good process of monitoring and review to ensure that the children's needs are sufficiently met. Training has taken place in a variety of formats to ensure continued and effective development.

Relationships with partnership agencies are good. Social workers said that they are routinely informed by the manager about any incidents or episodes of children going missing from the home.

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— ensure that staff provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. (Regulation 6(1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(vii)) In particular: ■ make sure that children's bedrooms have curtains or blinds ■ provide children's bathrooms with sanitary disposal facilities ■ check and remove used cigarettes from the garden area ■ repair damages to the home.	02/10/2020
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.	25/09/2020

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children. (Regulation 11(1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(xi))	
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. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)) In particular, update risk assessments after significant incidents involving harm or bullying.	25/09/2020

Children’s home details

Unique reference number: 2580887

Registered provider: Stanfield Care Children Services Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 6, Cuckoo Wharf, 435 Lichfield Road, Birmingham, Warwickshire B6 7SS

Responsible individual: Charlotte Riggs

Registered manager: Marie Brodie

Inspector

Lianne Bradford, Social Care Inspector

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