

2590934

Registered provider: Zone Central Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to three children who have learning disabilities.

Since the last inspection, the registered manager and responsible individual have left the service.

A new responsible individual and manager have been appointed to the home. The manager has not completed their application to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 July 2022

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 and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: 8 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/06/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Since the last inspection, the children's home has undergone significant changes. The home closed for refurbishment and the registration conditions changed from providing short break care to permanent care. The home reopened in December 2021 with a new manager. A new responsible individual was appointed in February 2022.

The impact of these changes combined with leaders and managers' poor decision-making have resulted in negative experiences for children living in the home. Leaders and managers fail to monitor the operation of the home effectively. They do not ensure that staff have the necessary skills and experience to support, safeguard and promote the well-being of children living in the home.

The property continues to undergo further refurbishment. However, some repairs are still to be addressed. For example, the garden is scruffy, and discarded wood with exposed nails pose a risk to children.

Children are given the opportunity to visit the home before they move in. Visits from their families and detailed transition plans help children to settle when they first arrive at the home. However, the home's children's guide is not provided in an age-appropriate, accessible format.

Staff support children to maintain important relationships with their family and friends. Children also enjoy a wealth of organised activities, such as swimming, bowling, gym sessions, trampolining and trips to the park.

Staff have supported one child to make progress in many aspects of their life. A social worker said, '[X] has improved sleep and personal care routines. They have developed socialisation skills and successfully transitioned into full-time education.'

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

Leaders and managers have failed to provide all children with a safe and stable home. They fail to assess children's placement suitability before they come to live in the home. This has resulted in children being inappropriately placed and having to move out of the home in an unplanned way. Staff do not effectively manage bullying incidents, which at times has made children feel unhappy and unsafe.

Children do not receive regular key-work support to help them to understand and manage their behaviours towards each other. There is no record of children's key-work prior to April 2022. This means the inspector is unclear whether children have

received help to prevent bullying in the home, minimise the risks of going missing from care, or prevent self-harm.

Children's behaviour support plans are not always effective. As a result, staff call the police to help manage children's behaviours. Staff do not consistently follow the strategies identified in children's behaviour support plans. On one occasion, a child who was upset and distressed was left alone in their bedroom to manage these difficult emotions. This was contrary to the child's behaviour support plan.

Strategies to keep children safe in the home are not effective. Staff do not undertake sufficient checks within the home to ensure that children do not have potentially dangerous items in their bedrooms, such as penknives, darts or a hammer. This places the children at an increased risk of harm in the home.

When children go missing from care, staff do not follow their missing-from-care procedures. For example, staff have delayed reporting incidents to the police. These reporting shortfalls cause delays in the police response, which compromises children's safety and well-being.

Leaders and managers fail to keep children's risk assessments up to date. This is despite the police and school sharing their concerns and evidence regarding the behaviour of children and the risks they face. This means that staff do not understand each child's vulnerabilities and any actions they should take to help minimise risk. On one occasion, staff decision-making increased the risk of harm to a child. For example, a vulnerable child, who was at significant risk of harm in the community, was enabled by staff to travel at night without any staff supervision or support to a central London transport hub.

Leaders and managers fail to provide support, training and guidance to staff working in the home in order to help them to keep children safe from harm. Staff have administered medication to a child that is not in line with their care plan. Staff do not receive training to meet the specific needs and risks of the children in their care. This includes child criminal exploitation, substance misuse and self-harming behaviours. Not all staff have undertaken physical restraint training.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The new manager has limited experience of managing a children's home. She has been in the post for seven months. The new manager has yet to complete her application to register with Ofsted. A new interim chief executive officer and responsible individual has been in post for five months.

Since the home reopened, there has been a 100% staff turnover. The majority of these staff have moved across from the company's sister home, and they are not enrolled to undertake a suitable residential children's home qualification. Furthermore, agency workers who are used to supplement the permanent staff team are not suitably experienced or qualified to work in children's homes.

Most permanent staff undertake training to meet the general needs of the children living in the home. However, staff do not have the necessary skills or expertise to meet the individual needs of the children in their care. Staff lack the knowledge and skills to communicate with children with autism spectrum disorder.

Leaders and managers' quality assurance and audit of the home's records are ineffective. Medicine administration records, rotas, incident logs, missing from care reports, the staff training matrix and children's risk assessments are either not up to date, not signed, and/or not dated or reviewed by the manager.

The home's quality-of-care review does not reflect the children's opinions and feedback about the home as required.

The independent person's monitoring reports are not sent to Ofsted in an accessible format. The reports are password protected. This restricts Ofsted's oversight and scrutiny of the home.

The home's statement of purpose is not an accurate reflection of the service. Leaders and managers have not ensured that there is a suitably trained first aider on every shift. Additionally, staff are not always debriefed after incidents of physical restraint, and safeguarding notifications are not always sent to Ofsted without delay.

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. Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b) (5))	21 August 2022
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to— HMCI. (Regulation 44 (1) (4)(a)(b) (7)(a)) In particular, the independent person's report must be sent to HMCI without password protection.	21 August 2022
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months.	21 August 2022

In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report"). The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))	
The registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children's home does not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. The registered person must ensure that— at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 31 (1) (2)(a))	21 August 2022
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home.	21 August 2022

In particular the registered person must ensure that— medicines kept in the home are stored in a secure place so as to prevent any child from having unsupervised access to them; medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and to no other child; and a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c))	
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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(b))	21 August 2022
*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;	21 August 2022

manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; 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 are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; 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)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(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 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; 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.	21 August 2022

demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received 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)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(i)(ii)(h))	
*A person may only manage a children's home if— the person is of integrity and good character; having regard to the size of the home, its statement of purpose, and the number and needs (including any needs arising from any disability) of the children— the person has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills to manage the home effectively and lead the care of children; and the person is physically and mentally fit to manage the home; and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the person in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. For the purposes of paragraph (1)(b)(i), a person has the appropriate experience and qualification if the person has— within the last 5 years, worked for at least 2 years in a position relevant to the residential care of children; worked for at least one year in a role requiring the supervision and management of staff working in a care role; and by the relevant date, attained— the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 5 Diploma"); or	21 August 2022

a qualification which the registered provider considers to be equivalent to the Level 5 Diploma. (Regulation 28 (1)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(c) (2)(a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that the manager submits an application to register as the manager of the home.	
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. For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c)(d) (4)(a)(b))	21 August 2022
The registered person must ensure that—	21 August 2022

within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))	
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;	21 August 2022

are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	21 August 2022
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; and ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b)) In particular, leaders and managers must keep a record of the actual staff rosters worked.	21 August 2022

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely domestic environments. In particular, leaders and managers should ensure that the garden is well maintained and safe for children to play in. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The children's home must produce a children's guide. The guide must be age appropriate and provided in an accessible format. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.21)

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: 2590934

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Zone Central Ltd

Registered provider address: Zone Central Ltd, 4 Cedar Park, Cobham Road, Ferndown Industrial Estate, Wimborne BH21 7SF

Responsible individual: Patricia Jarrett

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Victoria Jones, Social Care Inspector

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