

2591688

Registered provider: Mutual Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is one of two homes that are privately operated by a small company. It is set in castle grounds, outside a city.

The registered manager has been in post since 2020.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Ofsted completed a monitoring visit of this home on 27 and 28 January 2021. The report from this visit can be found on the Ofsted website.

This is the first full inspection of the home.

Inspection date: 27 September 2021

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 27 and 28 January 2021

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: good

The home is situated in an isolated rural area. Overall, it provides a homely environment for children. Children's bedrooms are personalised. The home feels like a family home. For example, office space is minimal. Photographs of the children can be seen on the walls in the lounge area. There is a large garden which provides an inviting space for children. Some areas need maintenance work. These include the thatched roof and some rotting windowsills.

Some aspects of the home create an institutionalised appearance. For example, inside the home there are some large padlocks. These locks are not necessary and are not in keeping with a homely environment. Window restrictors on children's bedroom windows are not required and some snacks are locked in a separate room.

Children are clearly as happy and relaxed in their home. They have good relationships with their carers. Both children told inspectors that they feel safe and that they like most of their carers. When children and carers do not relate well to each other, the action taken is not always timely. Consequently, the children are not learning how to form and maintain healthy relationships.

Education is in place for children. Carers strive to promote attendance, although this is not always successful. One child was not at school during the inspection due to the education plan for that day not being suitable for the child's needs.

Children are supported to access advocates in line with their needs. However, the children currently living at the home have chosen not to use this support. Children are also helped to access specialist therapy when needed.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Safeguarding procedures are not always followed. At times, the action taken has not prioritised the best interests of children. This includes a delay in the reporting of allegations and, on another occasion, poor safeguarding practice following a child's disclosure.

There has been one incident of physical intervention. This was appropriate and restriction minimal. Debriefs were held with both the child and the carers. Reflection on practice also takes place routinely after incidents.

Internet safety is managed in line with the needs of children. Age-appropriate access to devices is promoted. Independence is promoted. This includes children enjoying free time in the community. Children are also able to manage their own medication when it is assessed as appropriate for them to do so.

Impact risk assessments which look at the matching of children are not robust enough. Furthermore, at times, professional curiosity is lacking, which has led to one child having to leave the home.

Behaviour management systems are not always well considered and nurturing. For example, switching the internet off to promote positive behaviour is poor practice. When children swear, this is not consistently challenged.

Carers do always have the skills to manage children's behaviours. As a result, at times, carers call for out-of-hours support and make threats to contact the police.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has good oversight of the home and knows children well. Contingency planning when the manager is away from the home is not always effective and has led to some shortfalls.

Care planning documents are child centred. The information recorded is not always needed, and could be streamlined to ensure that guidance is easy to access. This includes the need to ensure that any risks which are no longer relevant are removed from risk assessments.

Recruitment practice is in line with safer recruitment procedure. The registered manager does not personally make verification calls to satisfy herself that appropriate questions are asked.

Carers have access to a wide range of training opportunities. However, the majority of these are computer based. Face-to-face training is in the process of being rolled out to enhance carers' knowledge and skills.

Supervision is structured and takes place at regular intervals. Opportunities for reflection are provided and the staff's well-being is considered.

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— make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom. ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1) (2)(b)(ix)(c)(i)) In particular, children's snack foods should be kept in the communal kitchen and not be locked in a separate room. In respect of the premises, the thatched roof and some windowsills need maintenance.	27 October 2021
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. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, carers should have the skills to manage difficult behaviours and promote positive relationships with children. Children should be consistently reminded that swearing is not appropriate.	27 October 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— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; 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)(v)(b)) In particular, safeguarding practice must ensure that disclosures are managed effectively. Impact assessments when children are new to the home must be thorough.	
No measure of control or discipline which is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (2) may be used in relation to any child. The following measures may not be used to discipline any child— any restriction, other than one imposed by a court or in accordance with regulation 22 (contact and access to communications), on— a child's access to any internet-based or telephone helpline providing counselling for children. (Regulation 19 (1) (2)(c)(iv)) In particular, switching off the internet to promote positive behaviour is not appropriate.	

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: 2591688

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Mutual Care Ltd

Registered provider address: 19 St Mary's Road, Portishead, Bristol, Somerset
BS20 6QP

Responsible individual: Marie Dowell

Registered manager: Lucy Vokes

Inspectors

Polly Soper, Social Care Inspector

Paula Lahey, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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