

2592750

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home offers care for up to two children who may have experienced neglect, abuse or trauma which has left them vulnerable. It is owned by a charitable organisation.

The manager was registered in July 2020.

Visit dates: 21 to 22 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 home was registered in July 2020, as the lockdown restrictions were lifted. There has been one child living at the home since it opened.

The staff maintain careful practice in response to the pandemic. They reiterate the social distancing rules to the child and deep clean the house and the car. Visitors are checked for any symptoms. This combination of precautionary measures provides basic protection against COVID-19.

This home offers care for children who are traumatised and require high levels of staff support and involvement from other agencies. The staff team is diverse in age and gender and team members are enthusiastic about their roles. However, during the short time that the home has been open, there have been changes to the staffing. These changes mean that the child has had to adapt to new staff, which does not help them to develop and sustain positive attachments.

The staff routinely seek the child's views and respect their individual needs and requests. The staff provide fun days out with the child's family members to support the family ties.

Staff support the child to attend education. The staff work with school staff and the child's social worker to ensure that appropriate education provision meets the child's needs. The staff recognised that the child needed extra support to return to school following the lockdown, and they provided that support.

The safety of children

The staff have managed several serious incidents safely. Due to the child's complexities, mental health issues and associated risks, several professionals closely guide and support the staff to manage these. There has been some reduction in the number of incidents. The staff can protect the child from harm.

Risk management plans include external professionals' input. Although these plans are updated regularly, they fail to include all the recent incidents and associated guidance. One serious incident, when the child left the home after taking an overdose, has not been added. The decision-making and staff responses have been discussed with the manager. However, there is no record of this debrief and no clear update to guide staff in the future.

The staff manage lengthy serious incidents in which the risks are high. Some of these incidents have involved other children from a neighbouring home. There are contingency staffing arrangements to reduce the toll on staff. The management team has increased the staffing levels and carefully deployed the experienced staff to ensure that staff have a rest option. This prevents the staff from becoming overtired and provides alternative staff to support the child during incidents.

The senior management team has managed an allegation about a member of staff and made a referral to the designated officer. Staffing has been considered to protect the member of staff and the child during the investigation. However, the manager failed to notify Ofsted about this, reducing the extra safeguard intended through notification.

The manager has received complaints from the child and responded to these verbally. However, there is no written record of the response. Therefore, it is unclear whether the child was satisfied with the outcome.

The child goes missing from the home. The manager reviews the records of incidents to identify triggers and prevent further incidents. An evaluation of the records of incidents resulted in plans being made for the staff to support the child to meet their family members in a safe and structured way. This has reduced the frequency of the child leaving the home without agreement.

Leaders and managers

This home opened during lockdown as part of the COVID-19 registration process. During this short time, the manager has resigned and a new manager has been appointed.

A high number of the staff are new. The staff have managed some long and difficult shifts during which the child has been unsettled and taken risks. Despite this, it is unclear whether the staff have regular supervision as the records of these meetings are unavailable. This does not ensure that the manager provides a good overview of staff practice.

The working partnership with professionals and parents is strong. Multi-agency meetings are held each week to review the child's behaviours and the support provided. A specialist mental health worker guides care planning and behaviour management. This provides a consistent response to serious incidents, reducing potential harm to the child.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.	31/10/2020

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— 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)(b)) In particular, ensure that the risk assessments include recent events and guide staff’s responses to the incidents.	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40(4)(c))	31/10/2020

Recommendations

- Staff should encourage children to share any concerns about their care or other matters as soon as they arise. Children must be able to take up issues or make a complaint with support and without any fear that this will result in any adverse consequences. Children must be aware of this procedure and be reminded of it as necessary. (Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations including the quality standards, page 23, paragraph 4.13)
- The registered person must demonstrate every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children’s attachments are not overly disrupted. (Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations including the quality standards, page 51, paragraph 10.1)
- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). (Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations including the quality standards, page 61, paragraph 13.3)

Children’s home details

Unique reference number: 2592750

Registered provider: Break

Registered provider address: Schofield House, 1 Spar Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR6 6BX

Responsible individual: Rachel Leslie

Registered manager: Jamie Offer

Inspector

Deirdra Keating, Social Care Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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