

# 2594218

Registered provider: Gordon Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This privately owned home cares for up to four children with learning disabilities and/or social and emotional difficulties.

This home registered with Ofsted in September 2020. The registered manager post has been vacant since August 2022. A new manager has recently been appointed, but they have not applied to register with Ofsted. The responsible individual facilitated this inspection.

At the time of this inspection, two children were living at the home and one child was visiting for short breaks.

Inspectors were aware that a serious safeguarding incident had occurred at the home since the previous inspection, which remains under investigation by the appropriate authorities. Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind. However, actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform the inspectors' judgements.

### Inspection dates: 11 and 12 October 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 failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

**Date of last inspection:** 28 July 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 28/07/2021      | Full            | Good                 |

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate**

Weaknesses and instability in leadership and management and poor safeguarding practice have compromised children's welfare and experiences.

A local authority has moved a child out of the home and is planning to move another child because of concerns in relation to safeguarding practice and standards of care. At the time of the inspection, an investigation into these matters was ongoing. The provider is working cooperatively with the local authority designated officer and senior managers in response to these matters of concern. The conclusion of this investigation is imminent. The provider is acting to address the issues being highlighted.

Children's records do not adequately reflect their daily experiences or progress. A social worker reported that they had experienced difficulties obtaining information from the provider about a child's needs and progress. Additionally, the register of children does not include all required information. Shortfalls in recording information about children undermine the monitoring of their progress and experiences.

Leaders and managers recognise these weaknesses and prior to the inspection they had devised an improvement plan, which is currently being implemented. The home has been refurbished and children are now living in a clean and comfortable home.

Children are supported to communicate their views and make daily choices. They enjoy various activities, such as exploring the local community and visits to the seaside. This is significant for the children living at the home because it helps them to develop important social and independence skills, for example, using public transport and paying for items when out shopping.

It is encouraging to see that the children living at the home are making some progress. This is recognised by parents and by professionals involved with them. During the inspection, positive relationships and interactions were observed between children and staff.

Children benefit from a behaviour therapist's input and support. With the therapist's and staff's support, children's confidence, independence, communication and social skills are improving.

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

Staff have not always taken swift action when they have had concerns about children's welfare and safety. On one occasion, staff failed to immediately report an allegation against a member of staff to the home's safeguarding lead and other relevant professionals. When managers became aware of this safeguarding concern,

the staff member involved in the allegation was immediately suspended and the local authority designated officer was made aware of these concerns.

On another occasion, a member of staff did not promptly report a suspicious mark on a child's body. Consequently, investigations into these concerns were delayed. The staff involved in these two serious incidents no longer work at the home. The provider has reported the concerns about these staff to the relevant safeguarding agencies.

The risk assessments and behaviour support plan for one child were not sufficiently detailed. Important information was left out about how staff should support this child to safely express their affection towards others. As a result, this child did not get the support and guidance that they needed to develop safe and appropriate relationships. This child no longer lives at the home.

Safeguarding practice is weakened by inconsistent and sometimes inaccurate recording. Shortfalls were identified in some incident reports and restraint records. This has weakened leaders' and managers' oversight and scrutiny of practice and of significant incidents in the home. With the support of the independent person, leaders and managers have devised a detailed action plan to improve safeguarding practice in the home.

Children are helped to develop safer ways to manage difficult emotions. Staff support children to develop safer coping strategies when feeling distressed. For some children, incidents of self-harm are decreasing. A behavioural therapist praised the input and support given to a child, which had resulted in 'significant reductions' in a child's emotional distress. This child no longer needs support from mental health services.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

The leadership and management of the home are not stable. Since the last inspection, the home has been led by three different managers. A newly appointed manager started working at the home a few days before the inspection. Although the new manager has some previous experience of working in children's services, she does not have experience of working in children's residential care. She has not yet applied to register with Ofsted.

The frequent changes in management have negatively impacted on the continuity of care provided to children and the consistency of practice in the home.

Leaders do not consistently promote a strong safeguarding culture in the home. Although the manager demonstrates a basic understanding of safeguarding procedures, there is no evidence of the provider assessing this during her recruitment.

Most staff are also new to the home and most do not have previous experience of working in children's residential care. The supervision they receive is not always

reflective or focused on the needs, experiences and plans for children. Leaders and managers are missing opportunities to guide, support and develop a new and inexperienced staff team.

Staff training and development has also been insufficient. Leaders have failed to ensure that all staff have undertaken mandatory training or specific learning about caring for disabled children and using physical restraint. As a result, a staff member found it distressing when they had to restrain a child without having any relevant training and guidance.

Leaders and managers recognise that training is not adequate and they are taking steps to address these weaknesses. Training for staff is improving. The responsible individual is spending more time at the home to bring about the improvements needed. They have enrolled staff on the relevant vocational qualification to enhance their residential childcare knowledge. The staff spoken to demonstrate awareness of safeguarding procedures such as whistle-blowing and reporting child protection concerns.

The provider has not satisfactorily addressed all the requirements raised at the last inspection. The quality of care review still does not include the views of staff. Although new staff undertake a general induction, the quality of care review does not consider whether or not individual staff members have previous experience of children's residential care.

The responsible individual recognises the need for improvement in staff practice and the quality of care provided to children. They have employed an experienced quality assurance manager to help the home's new manager bring about the improvements needed.

## 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         |
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| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies;</p> <p>that the home's day-to-day care is delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(vi)(vii)(b))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that all potential risks are assessed and effective strategies are in place to minimise harm, that staff understand their safeguarding roles and report all concerns swiftly and appropriately, and that all staff understand the home's whistle-blowing policy and procedures and follow them.</p> | 14 November 2022 |
| <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 14 November 2022 |

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| <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(f)(h))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that leaders and managers have strong and effective oversight of children’s progress and experiences. They must promote a strong safeguarding culture and ensure that staff receive the training, support and supervision that they need to care for and safeguard children.</p> |                         |
| <p>A person may only manage a children’s home if—</p> <p>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—</p> <p>the person has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills to manage the home effectively and lead the care of children; and</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1)(b)(i), a person has the appropriate experience and qualification if the person has—</p> <p>within the last 5 years, worked for at least 2 years in a position relevant to the residential care of children. (Regulation 28 (1)(b)(i) (2)(a))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>14 November 2022</p> |
| <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction. (Regulation 33 (1)(a))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>14 November 2022</p> |

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| <p>In particular, staff induction plans must consider their previous knowledge and experience of working in children's residential care.</p> <p>This requirement was raised at the last inspection and is restated.</p>                                                                                                                                                                            |                  |
| <p>The system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of staff. (Regulation 45 (5))</p> <p>This requirement was raised at the last inspection and is restated.</p>                                                                                                                                                 | 14 November 2022 |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development. (Regulation 33 (4)(a))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff undertake all relevant training, including safeguarding disabled children and safer caring.</p>                                                                               | 14 November 2022 |
| <p>Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4;</p> <p>ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that all records are sufficiently detailed, current and accurate.</p> | 14 November 2022 |

## Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff supervision and performance management are child-focused. Supervision records should demonstrate that staff reflect on children's experiences. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

## 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:** 2594218

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Gordon Care Services Limited

**Registered provider address:** 7 St Albans Grove, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 1ND

**Responsible individual:** Sylvia Gordon

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspectors

Sharon Payne, Social Care Inspector  
Maud Pipim-Addo, Social Care Inspector

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