

2613806

Registered provider: Solace Care Redbridge Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run home provides care for up to four children with social and/or emotional difficulties.

The home was registered with Ofsted in December 2020. The home has not had a registered manager since April 2021.

There were two children living at the home at the time of this inspection. Both children declined to speak with the inspector.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 August 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 18 May 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/05/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
11/01/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Leaders, managers and staff changes have had a detrimental impact on children's experiences, overall progress and the development of the home.

The arrangements in place to support children's education need to be strengthened. A school principal said:

'The lack of consistent key worker support may have contributed to this young person missing key moments in school, such as external exams, vocational opportunities, college interviews and our Year 11 leavers' day. I fully understand that this young person was very challenging to motivate, but it might have been possible to persuade or motivate him to attend these key educational moments if an adult with a strong, trusted, understanding, consistent relationship with the young person was available.'

Children know how to make a complaint. Children can share their views during house meetings and key-working sessions. Furthermore, children have been offered access to independent advocacy.

Children's records do not demonstrate what social, educational and recreational activities they have been offered, or what staff do to encourage them to take part in activities. One parent expressed concern that their child is allowed to spend too much time playing on gadgets and is not offered enough outdoor activities due to staff struggling to manage the child's behaviour.

Staff support children to prepare for independent living. Children are encouraged to prepare their own meals, tidy their bedrooms and do their laundry. Furthermore, children are supported to complete their food shopping online. However, staff do not always ensure that children have a healthy diet. One parent feels that this has led to their child becoming overweight.

Staff do not consistently record the consequences and rewards used. Subsequently, it is unclear how staff encourage good behaviour, whether measures taken to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature and how children's achievements are celebrated.

Staff understand that it is important for children to maintain relationships with the people who are special to them. Staff support children to repair fractured relationships with their families. As a result, one child has resumed contact with their mother.

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

The manager and staff demonstrate a good understanding of children's needs and vulnerabilities. However, children's risk assessments are not routinely updated after significant information comes to light. For example, a risk assessment for one child was not updated with information about their cannabis use. This compromises staff's ability to safeguard children and weakens their ability to provide a consistent approach to managing risk.

In the main, the manager and staff respond promptly when the children go missing from home. They do their best to maintain regular contact with the children and encourage their prompt and safe return home. However, the children's missing-from-care protocols do not consistently contain correct and up-to-date information. For example, one protocol includes incorrect details of the child's heritage, and both protocols incorrectly identify the risk of the children going missing from home as low. Furthermore, the recommended strategies for staff to follow when the children are missing from home do not help to minimise risk effectively. The two children went missing from the home during this inspection.

Staff carry out key-work sessions that give children the opportunity to think through the consequences of their actions. These sessions focus on children's individual circumstances and presenting needs, such as being missing from home and cannabis use. However, staff's practice and their response to known risks vary. For example, despite finding drug paraphernalia twice in one child's bedroom, staff have not carried out any further room checks. Furthermore, records of room searches do not include the child's views or manager's comments. This compromises the management oversight of practice and the effectiveness of this measure.

Safer recruitment practices are not consistently robust. One new member of staff did not provide their full employment history, and discrepancies in their employment history and references were not explored. Furthermore, the verification of this member of staff's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check was not carried out until one month after they commenced their employment.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the policies and procedures to follow if allegations are made against staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The leadership and management of the home are inconsistent. The home has not had a registered manager since May 2021. Since then, the home has been through a challenging time, with the departure of four managers, two responsible individuals and several staff members. A new manager was appointed in August 2023. The instability in the leadership and management of the home has an impact on the management oversight and consistency in staff practice.

Staff report that, despite the changes in the leadership team, they feel well supported by leaders and managers. However, not all staff benefit from regular supervision sessions, and supervision is not always focused on children's needs and experiences. Staff have not had their performance individually and formally appraised. Furthermore, staff have not completed all of the training necessary to help them to meet the specific needs of the children in their care, such as criminal exploitation and substance misuse. This undermines staff's learning and development and their ability to meet children's needs effectively.

Leaders and managers do not challenge the placing authorities effectively when they do not provide the required support to meet children's needs. For example, one child has not had his initial looked after review within the required timescale.

Leaders and managers are aware of the home's strengths and the areas for development. The new manager has plans in place to improve practice and the monitoring of the quality of care provided. However, these have not yet been fully implemented and embedded in day-to-day practice. Therefore, their effectiveness cannot be measured.

The independent person's monthly monitoring visits to the home provide robust scrutiny. Detailed recommendations for the improvement of practice make a positive contribution to the monitoring and the improvement of the home.

Two of the four requirements raised at the previous inspection have been suitably addressed. The review of the quality of care has been completed and the admission process has improved. However, two requirements have been restated.

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, The 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. 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; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vi)) In particular, this refers to the registered person ensuring that missing-from-care protocols are completed for each child and that they provide staff with clear strategies to manage risk. Leaders and managers must ensure that children's risk assessments are updated with any significant information and that appropriate steps are taken to minimise risk, for example room searches are carried out when necessary. This requirement was raised at the previous inspection and is restated.	16 October 2023
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.	16 October 2023

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; 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; 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)(h)) In particular, this refers to the registered person ensuring that the monitoring and review systems lead to consistent improvement in the quality and consistency of recorded documents. This requirement was raised at the previous inspection and is restated.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)(c))	16 October 2023
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child’s placing authority effectively in the child’s care, in accordance with the child’s relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child’s needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority’s or a relevant person’s performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each	16 October 2023

child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c))	
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 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 manager must submit an application to Ofsted so her fitness to manage the home can be assessed.	10 October 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they maintain good employment practice, as set out in regulations 31 to 33. In particular, this relates to ensuring that all discrepancies in employment history and references are explored and that DBS checks are verified. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- The registered person should ensure that all children's case records (regulation 36) are kept up to date. Specifically, that the consequences and rewards for children's achievements are reflected. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that where children placed at the home are not participating in education because they have been excluded or are not on a school roll for some other reason, staff work closely with the placing authority so that the children are supported and enabled to resume full-time education as soon as possible. In the interim, the children should be supported to sustain or regain their confidence in education and be engaged in suitable structured activities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)

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: 2613806

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Solace Care Redbridge Ltd

Registered provider address: Unit 2A, 420 Eastern Avenue, Ilford, Essex IG2 6NQ

Responsible individual: Alison Macaulay

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Aneta Wasilewska, Social Care Inspector

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