

2617499

Registered provider: Harmony Residential Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private organisation. It provides care for up to five children with social and emotional difficulties and children who have experienced trauma.

There has been no registered manager since 17 April 2023.

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 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	inadequate
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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: 5 July 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
05/07/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
19/01/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
16/06/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of the inspection, there were two children living at the home. One of the children moved into the home one week before the inspection. The other child is making progress and generally has positive experiences. However, several shortfalls undermine the quality of care that children receive.

Feedback from parents is mixed. One parent said that their child's recent move to the home was managed well. However, this parent also said that communication has not been good enough. This poor communication delayed the sharing of important information about the child's welfare.

The home is spacious and well furnished. The children benefit from personalised bedrooms that are decorated in line with their preferences. However, damage has not always been repaired in a timely way. The garden is overgrown. Nettles and weeds have not been removed from the garden and front driveway. Additionally, some parts of the home need cleaning. These issues detract from what is otherwise a well-appointed family-style home.

Monitoring devices are used in the home. Their use appears proportionate. However, there is no written consent from the placing authority for the use of a device for one child. Therefore, it is unclear whether permission has been granted for its use.

Staff provide support for children who have previously experienced gaps in their education. Staff have good working relationships with school staff and provide one-to-one support to help with one child's attendance. Staff participate in multi-agency meetings to review plans and advocate for children to access their right to education. Staff plan activities for children who are not in full-time education, to provide them with learning opportunities.

Staff have oversight of children's health. Appropriate referrals are made to specialist mental health teams to help meet children's additional needs. The staff are working with one child to help them to quit smoking.

During the inspection, both children provided positive feedback about staff and said they enjoy spending time with them. When children do raise concerns, they are satisfied with the staff's responses. This helps children make informed choices about their care and ensures their rights are respected.

The staff offer children a range of activities that support their well-being and interests. One child has been able to form positive, important friendships with peers outside of the home.

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

On two occasions, managers have failed to follow safeguarding procedures when concerns have been raised about staff. There were delays in managers referring a substantiated allegation of harm involving a staff member to the local authority designated officer (LADO). This means external oversight was not in place when it should have been. After the allegations were shared with the LADO, appropriate steps were taken. However, records relating to the investigation were poorly organised and did not capture the process or conclusions that led to the actions identified.

A separate concern raised by a child was not appropriately responded to by a manager for four days. Immediate protective measures were not put in place during this time. A LADO referral was also delayed. This does not protect children or staff. Leaders and managers have identified this failing themselves and have adapted procedures to reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence.

Children's risk management plans are updated regularly. However, they do not always provide staff with clear strategies to manage known risks. For one child at risk of exploitation, written strategies for managing risks around smoking paraphernalia, bladed articles and online safety are not in place. The absence of clear guidance, together with high staff turnover, increases the potential for staff to be unaware of important risk-reduction measures.

Recruitment checks for agency staff are thorough. However, managers do not ensure that safe recruitment processes for permanent staff are consistently followed. Gaps in applicants' employment histories are not always fully explored. This could lead to unsuitable adults working at the home.

Staff reinforce children's positive behaviours. The staff use proportionate and restorative consequences. They are equipped to de-escalate incidents without recourse to physical interventions. Consequently, staff support children to make positive changes to their behaviour.

Staff receive safeguarding training. They are aware of children's needs and the home's safeguarding procedures.

A detailed location risk assessment informs staff of the potential risks to children in the local area. The identification of these risks and actions taken to reduce them help to keep children safer.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Although leaders and managers were aware of some of the weaknesses found, they were not aware of several shortfalls identified at this inspection. Internal monitoring has not been strong enough to make the improvements necessary to provide consistent good-quality care to children.

The registered manager has recently resigned from their post. Since October 2021, there has only been a registered manager in post for three months. The absence of consistent and stable leadership has significantly contributed to the failure to sustain previous improvements. Leaders have recently recruited a new manager, who has relevant experience. Interim management arrangements are in place until the new manager starts work at the home.

Staff retention is a long-standing issue at this home and there has recently been high staff turnover. Despite this, the reasons for staff turnover are not always explored or reviewed by leaders. As a result, leaders do not have a clear understanding of why turnover is so high and therefore no clear plan exists to address this. Identifying and addressing the underlining reasons are important for children to receive continuity of care.

Since the last inspection, two children have moved on after a short time. Leaders and managers have not yet formally reviewed these unplanned endings. Therefore, potential learning points that could inform future practices may be missed.

Leaders' and managers' internal monitoring systems are not good enough. Recording systems are disorganised and unwieldy. The depth of managerial oversight and evaluation of incidents is inconsistent. Failings in the home's fire doors had not been identified. The internal quality of care review has not been submitted within required timescales. Overall, leaders and managers do not have a clear understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses and, therefore, have failed to make improvements.

Leaders and managers have failed to notify Ofsted without delay about allegations against staff members at the home. This means that Ofsted's ability to monitor safeguarding arrangements has been reduced.

Staff are positive about the support that they receive. They confirm that they receive regular supervision sessions with managers. However, there are significant gaps in supervision records, and leaders are unable to locate many of them. The records that were seen lacked depth and did not capture the detail of the discussions or reflection that took place or the advice that was given. Furthermore, probationary reviews for staff have not been completed in line with the home's policy. A failure to provide good-quality supervision and appropriate support during staff's probation means that staff may not receive the support and guidance they need.

Staff receive a wide range of training. This includes training specific to supporting children's needs. This helps staff to have the knowledge they need to undertake their roles.

Leaders and managers have good relationships with social workers and school staff. Professionals provided positive feedback about communication and partnership working.

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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(vi)(vii))	16 June 2023
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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i))	16 June 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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—	30 June 2023

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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(e)(f)(h)) In particular: ensure that records are clear and accurate; ensure that managerial monitoring systems identify shortfalls and that these are acted on to make improvements; ensure that staff turnover is monitored and reviewed to understand and, where possible, address any trends; review children's placement endings to identify lessons learned and inform future practice.	
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; if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(d))	16 June 2023
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))	16 June 2023

The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the child’s placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance. (Regulation 24 (1)(b))	30 June 2023
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is decorated and maintained to a consistently good standard throughout. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that a record of supervision is 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)
- The registered person should ensure that performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. In particular, ensure that new staff receive support during their probation consistent with the provider's policies and procedures. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- The registered person should develop effective working relationships with each child's placing authority and with other relevant persons. In particular, the registered person should ensure that consistently good levels of communication are established with parents and that these are adhered to. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.3)
- The registered person should ensure the internal quality of care review is sent to Ofsted within the required timescale. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.3)

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: 2617499

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Harmony Residential Homes Limited

Registered provider address: 155 Cross Road, Mawneys, Romford RM7 8EA

Responsible individual: Sajida Kiyanni

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Mark Anderton, Social Care Inspector

Leanne Lyon, Social Care Inspector

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