

2617499

Registered provider: Harmony Residential Homes Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care for up to five children with social and emotional difficulties.

There has not been a registered manager in post since 31 October 2021. A manager was appointed and started in September 2022. They have applied to Ofsted to register.

Inspection date: 7 December 2022

Date of last inspection: 5 July 2022

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

The care of children

Since the last inspection, one child has left the home and one child has moved in. There were two children living at the home at the time of this inspection. The move for the child who left was a planned move, due to their need for a specialist provision. Staff supported the child well and worked with the local authority to continue to care for the child until a new placement could be found.

The child who moved in has settled well. Their social worker said that the manager responded quickly to an escalating need for the child to be safe, bringing forward the start of the placement. The social worker said that staff worked sympathetically and discreetly to make the child feel secure and cared for. The social worker said, 'The staff made her feel special at a time when she felt awful.' The manager made sure that other children were not negatively affected by this move, and sought their views first.

The manager ensures that children's health needs are met as a priority when they move to the home. Children have been registered with a GP, dentist and optician without delay. Children are encouraged to eat healthily and take regular exercise, such as bicycle riding and fun gym sessions in the garden.

The manager is actively building stronger relationships with one child's school. The manager attends parent/carer consultations for the child and has set up daily handovers before the child arrives home. Staff use these to monitor the child's behaviour and progress, which guides them in the use of consequences and rewards. One child has much-improved attendance at school. The manager responds quickly to find alternative provision for children who have moved in after lengthy periods of non-attendance. While these provisions are being organised, the manager has put in place programmes of activity and independence-building.

Staff treat children with warmth, consistency and respect. Children are very fond of the staff and say how important the staff are to them. Children who have experienced significant trauma and, therefore, a breakdown of trust in adults, have rebuilt this with staff. The use of agency staff has significantly reduced. Improving staff recruitment and retention has brought consistency for children.

The manager has made improvements in the use of key-working sessions with children to gain their views or share expectations and information with them. This includes discussions on positive behaviours, expectations of the treatment of other people and substance misuse. Children's meetings take place regularly and have good attendance and input.

Children have built friendships in their community. They enjoy using local resources such as skate parks, and invite friends to visit for meals and to play. Children enjoy special activities including going to trampoline parks, for meals out and on shopping trips.

The safety of children

Staff know children's individual risks very well and what to do to reduce these. They said that the new manager has brought the previously used model of care back to the forefront of their approach to children. Staff say that this has brought better consistency of support to children and clearer expectations for the children. They feel that this reduces incidents of negative behaviour and helps restore relationships quickly.

The manager has made improvements to records relating to risk management and staff's responsibilities. Serious incidents are notified to Ofsted quickly. The manager and designated safeguarding lead meet regularly to discuss children's incidents and look for improvements in staff practice. Effective safeguarding is discussed at all staff supervision sessions and team meetings.

Staff continue to monitor children's smoking and substance misuse, encouraging engagement with cessation services. Managers are active in the community to alert shopkeepers when children may try to buy tobacco. Managers have ongoing discussions with community police officers.

There have been no incidents of children going missing from care. Children's detailed plans mitigate the risk of this. The plans include how children's free time in the community is monitored for any dangers, while maintaining their independence and enjoyment.

Care plans emphasise the importance of de-escalation techniques to avoid incidents. Historically, the number of restraints has been low, but this recently increased for a period for one child. Appropriately trained staff use restraint when necessary and in line with the child's agreed care plan. Records demonstrate that, after these incidents, extensive review takes place with all those involved. However, the manager has not always signed records to confirm that the staff debrief has taken place and added the details to records.

The manager has ensured that the home's location risk assessment and fire risk assessment are reviewed and updated in line with regulations. Children take part in regular fire drills.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

There is a new manager in post who has worked in children's social care for several years. They have applied to register with Ofsted. Staff all said that the manager has brought stability and improvement. Staff say the manager is a strong advocate for

children, who wants them to do well. All the requirements and recommendations raised at the last inspection have been met. The manager has received very positive support from the responsible individual and managers of other homes in the organisation.

The manager has prioritised staff's learning and development to bring about improvements in children's experiences. Staff now have regular training, including specialist face-to-face training from external professionals. Staff now receive monthly detailed supervision sessions with the manager, which include discussion on practice development. Staff are encouraged to reflect on incidents and experiences to improve their practice and build their confidence.

There have been no complaints made to the home. An external professional said that the manager has worked professionally and diligently with local authority and police professionals to support good transitions. They praised the manager's detailed and regular communication through a challenging situation, which ultimately ended in a positive experience for a child.

A recent recruitment drive has been successful and a robust recruitment process is in place. There are enough staff to keep children safe and meet their needs. Agency staff are only used as a last resort. Managers have regularly worked directly with children to cover any gaps on rotas. This has helped managers to build relationships with children and understand the impact of the care on them.

A newly appointed independent person has brought a robust and useful approach which is helping to drive improvement at the home. The visitor provides in-depth evaluations of the quality of care, which the manager has used to action improvements.

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

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 registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii))	31 December 2022

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

Inspector

Jamie Cousins, Social Care Inspector

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