

2623568

Registered provider: Esland North Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private organisation and provides care for up to three children who have experienced emotional difficulties and have complex needs.

The previous registered manager has voluntarily cancelled his registration with Ofsted in February 2022 and is no longer working in the company. There is an interim manager in post who is yet to submit an application to register.

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 April 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

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 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

A compliance notice under regulation 13, the leadership and management standard was issued following the home's interim inspection on 18 January 2022. This notice was reissued following a monitoring visit completed on 7 March 2022.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/01/2022	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
22/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

Leadership and management arrangements in the home are inadequate. For example, regular changes in the staffing arrangements of the home have led to inconsistent care for children. This means that children's individual needs have not been consistently met. Consequently, this has had a negative impact on the overall experiences and progress of children.

Leaders have failed to ensure that the home has enough skilled and experienced staff to provide care for each child. While children spoke positively about the relationships they share with permanent staff, they raised concerns with the number of temporary staff used to support them. One child told the inspector that inconsistencies in staffing has led to incidents in the home. Furthermore, the child stated that they would rather spend time in their bedroom than work with staff that they do not know. As a result, staff do not always provide children with consistent care.

Leaders do not always maintain the home's environment to a good standard. Although some parts of the home are well maintained, this is not consistently the case. Some areas of the home have been damaged and have not been repaired. For example, a windowpane in the manager's office had been damaged during an incident. However, leaders have not taken action to ensure that this was repaired efficiently and effectively. Consequently, this lack of action has an effect on the quality of the environment in which children live.

Despite some of the shortfalls identified, children make some progress. For example, both children attend an education, employment or training provision. Staff have supported one child to re-engage with education and she has recently started a new school. Another child described how working in a restaurant has helped to improve his independence. This means that children develop their social skills and aspire to do well with their learning.

Staff support children to ensure that their specific health needs are met effectively. For example, staff ensure that one child attends specialist health appointments to provide support for her mental health. Also, children attend and engage with routine health appointments. As a result, children's health needs are met, which helps them to make progress.

Staff support and help children to prepare for independence. They promote and develop independent skills by working closely with children and the important people in their lives. The interim manager balances the risks with opportunities for children to improve their skills. This means that children are better prepared for adulthood when they leave the home.

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

Staff do not always assess risks effectively when working with children. For example, following a staff shortage, leaders decided to reduce the number of staff providing support to children. However, no risk assessment was put in place to provide staff with the support and guidance to meet the children's needs. This has the potential to compromise children's safety.

Staff do not always manage significant incidents with children successfully. For example, during one incident, they were unable to manage one child's behaviour at a time when the child was distressed. Poor assessment of risk and decision-making by staff led to the police being called to assist. This resulted in the police physically restraining the child. Furthermore, this incident was reviewed by a senior leader, who identified shortfalls in staff practice and decision-making. However, no debrief or follow-up discussions were completed with the staff. Consequently, staff were not given the opportunity to reflect on and learn from the experience. This lack of reflection leaves children vulnerable during times of crisis.

Leaders do not consistently ensure that staff receive support to manage children's anxieties. Staff are not routinely spoken to or debriefed following incidents requiring physical restraint with children. This means that leaders fail to provide staff with adequate guidance and learning to support them in keeping children safe.

Safe recruitment of permanent staff who work in the home is good. However, this does not extend to agency staff who are employed to work in the home. There is a lack of attention to detail in clarifying the reasons that agency staff have left previous roles when working with children. As a result, leaders cannot be fully assured about the suitability of people they employ to work with children.

In contrast to some of the shortfalls identified, other safeguarding concerns with children have been managed well by the interim manager. For example, following concerns identified regarding a child's behaviour, the manager arranged a multi-agency safeguarding meeting with both children's placing authorities. This meant that strategies and actions were identified for staff to implement to keep children safe.

The management of and response to children making allegations against staff is good. On two occasions, leaders have acted quickly to involve the relevant agencies and they have followed their child protection procedures effectively. As a result, investigations into staff misconduct have been thorough and appropriate actions have been taken to ensure children's safety.

Children rarely go missing from the home. Since the last inspection, there has been one incident. During this incident, staff reacted promptly and followed the child's protocols effectively. This resulted in the child returning safely to the home immediately and a return-home interview took place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The home has been without a registered manager since the home's last interim inspection. Senior leaders have attempted to recruit to the vacant position but have been unsuccessful. As a result, the service manager is supporting with the day-to-day running of the home. However, due to staff shortages, she has been expected to work a high number of shifts on the home's rota. Consequently, this has led to shortfalls in the oversight of the leadership and management of the home.

Leaders' monitoring and oversight of the home does not always result in improvements to the quality of care. For example, systems used have failed to ensure that shortfalls identified with the home's environment were addressed. Furthermore, inconsistent management systems failed to ensure that staff received debriefs following significant incidents with children. In addition, errors in staff recording of incidents were not identified. These shortfalls do not improve the quality of care that children receive.

Staffing arrangements in the home have led to inconsistencies in the support provided to children. Some staff do not have sufficient experience and skills to consistently meet the needs of children. For example, no staff currently working in the home have achieved the relevant qualification. Also, one staff member has recently had their probationary period extended due to poor performance. However, this same staff member has been left leading shifts in the home. As a result, children do not receive consistent care from experienced staff.

New staff do not receive regular supervision in line with the home's policies and procedures in order to support them in their role. This means that new staff are not always provided with the opportunities to improve their practice in caring for children. In contrast, other staff have received regular supervision. Supervision records viewed by the inspector were reflective and detailed, and provided actions for staff to complete to improve their practice.

Despite the shortfalls, the interim manager has worked hard to provide support to staff and children. Staff and children stated that they feel supported and that they can approach her for help. External professionals comment positively on the changes made by the manager and feel that communication with them has 'dramatically improved'. One professional commented positively on the support provided to one child by stating that '[the manager] has been brilliant and has been a consistent factor in supporting [the child]'.

At the last inspection, the home was issued with a compliance notice under regulation 13, the leadership and management standard. While some aspects of the steps required in the notice have been addressed, the home has not fully met all the requirements outlined in the notice. This does not reassure the regulator that leaders are able to take action to improve practice.

Senior leaders are aware of the home's shortfalls. During the inspection, they have explained the difficulties they have encountered in recruiting staff and a registered

manager to the home. Consequently, they have made the decision to close the home and they have submitted the relevant deregistration documents to Ofsted.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) In particular, the provider should ensure that the home's environment is well maintained, and that work is undertaken to repair damage to areas of the home.	8 June 2022
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))	8 June 2022

In particular, the provider should ensure that a risk assessment is in place to provide staff with guidance when working on reduced staffing levels with children.	
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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; and ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(d)(e)) In particular, the provider should ensure that the home has sufficient numbers of staff in place to meet the needs of the children. Furthermore, the provider should ensure that staff have the skills and experience to lead shifts in the home in order to provide children with continuous and consistent care.	8 June 2022
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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) In particular, managers should have clear monitoring and review systems in place to identify and address shortfalls in	8 June 2022

order to improve the quality of care that children receive in the home.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) In particular, leaders must ensure that all staff receive regular supervision and feedback on their performance in line with the home’s policies and procedures.	8 June 2022
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy (“the behaviour management policy”) which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children’s home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. 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. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (3)(b)(i)) In particular, managers should ensure that all behaviour management records are regularly reviewed, and that staff are debriefed following incidents requiring physical restraint with children.	8 June 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they maintain good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguard children and minimise potential risks to them. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.1)

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 2623568

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Esland North Limited

Registered provider address: Esland Ltd, Suite 1 & 5, Riverside Business Centre, Foundry Lane, Milford, Belper DE56 0RN

Responsible individual: Jodie Whitehouse

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector

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