

2625941

Registered provider: Huntercombe Young People Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private company. It is registered to care for children who have learning disabilities or who have social or emotional difficulties. It provides full-time care and accommodation for up to 10 children, and short breaks for up to five children. The short-breaks service is currently suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2021. This is the home's first inspection since it has changed ownership.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 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 and widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, and the care and experiences of children are poor.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
-----------------	-----------------	----------------------

Not previously inspected		
--------------------------	--	--

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Shortfalls in how well children are helped and protected and the effectiveness of leaders and managers have impacted on the overall judgement for this home. There are nine children currently living in the home. Positive interactions were observed between children and staff during this inspection and it is evident that some children have good relationships with some member of staff.

The quality of the decoration and furnishings in the home varies. For some children, they have access to a tasteful, spacious kitchen, and bathroom with a spa bath. For other children, their kitchen is messy and cluttered, with staff files and belongings on food preparation surfaces. For these children their bath is damaged and surrounded by mouldy sealant. A number of windows around the property have been broken for several weeks. There is no date for repair. This does not provide for a homely or comfortable environment for all children.

Some internal doors in the home are locked and there is no safeguarding reason for this. It is important for children's sense of belonging to be able to access all areas of their home.

Not all children are supported to receive an education. Efforts have been made for one child to have a teacher come into the home three days a week. However, two children are receiving no education or training. This is not in line with their care plans and the manager has not challenged this failure. This prevents these children from learning and achieving.

Activities to stimulate children's interests and hobbies are frequent. The large garden is equipped with toys and games for the children to enjoy. Outings take place regularly to both outdoor and indoor venues. This helps children to have varied and memorable experiences. Staff listen and act on children's wishes.

There are some shortfalls in meeting children's bespoke and complex health needs. The failure of the manager to ensure that staff follow health protocols for children means that children's needs are not consistently met.

Children spend time with those people who are important to them. Staff facilitate and support this time. Families and friends are invited to spend time in the home. One parent described a 'pod' which was set up during the most restrictive periods of the COVID-19 pandemic. This enabled her to still visit and spend time with her child. This helps promote the children's identities and important relationships.

Children have key workers who undertake direct work with them. Children are helped to understand decisions which have been made about them and about their future plans. However, these sessions are infrequent. For one child, there was no

session for four months. This means children are missing out on opportunities to learn.

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

The daily operation of the home is dependent on the use of agency staff. There are occasions when agency staff outnumber permanent staff on shift. This means that children with complex needs, who require consistent care and support, are regularly looked after by different agency staff who they do not know. This does not promote the children's welfare.

The manager does not maintain a profile of the agency staff who work in the home. She does not check or retain copies of their identification. This means that when agency staff enter the home, the manager is unable to confirm that these individuals are who they say they are. Children are at significant risk of harm because of this failure.

The manager does not apply safer recruitment checks to agency staff and does not check their employment history, or if their employment references are relevant, suitable or verified. She is unaware if agency staff have been subject to any disciplinary investigations or actions, or if there are any safeguarding or practice concerns. For some agency staff, their disclosure and barring service certificates had not been reviewed or updated for over 12 months. The manager was unaware if the information presented on these certificates was still accurate.

The manager is unaware of the skills, experience and backgrounds of the agency staff working in the home. She does not explore if agency staff are able to understand the children's needs or are capable of supporting them. As a result, the manager cannot be assured that these agency staff are suitable to work with the children.

Not all agency staff have completed behaviour management and physical restraint training. As a result, permanent staff who are appropriately trained are often called on to assist. This leaves some children without the ratio of staff that they need to meet their needs. In addition, when children are restrained by untrained staff this may result in physical injury or harm.

The manager does not ensure that agency staff have the opportunity to read the children's risk assessments and care plans. If agency staff do have this opportunity, the manager does not have an appropriate system in place to record this. This means agency staff are unlikely to understand children's risks, routines, care needs and behaviours. This places children at risk of serious harm.

Staffing ratios for some children are not in line with their identified needs and behaviours. This places some children at risk of harm, both in the home and in the community. The manager has failed to effectively challenge the placing authority's decisions to refuse additional staff.

Children's risks are identified in their risk assessment. Trauma-informed behaviour support plans are informative. These help staff know how to respond to a child at every stage of a behaviour. However, for one child who is at risk of absconding while in the community, the safeguarding measures in place are not sufficient to keep them safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The manager considers all referrals, and the potential impact of new children, on the children who already live in the home. However, the manager does not consult with all the important people in the child's life. Therefore, significant information is missed. As a result, children have moved into the home when the service is unable to meet their needs. This is detrimental to children's development.

Staff training needs are not identified at the earliest opportunity when new children are admitted to the home. This means that, for one child, there was an unacceptable delay in staff understanding and being able to respond to the child's self-harming behaviour.

Most permanent staff said that they feel supported by the manager. However, some staff feel unsupported. They are concerned by the lack of permanent staff in place. This prevents the development of a core team of staff for the children. Staffing stability will improve children's experiences and progress.

Restraints sometimes take place in this home. However, staff debriefs do not always take place. This prevents staff from being given the opportunity to receive support, reflect, learn and improve practice.

Staff are not provided with regular supervision. This means that the staff do not have sufficient opportunity to reflect on their practice to raise the standard of care that children receive. Concerns raised by staff within supervision are not always acted on. As a result, issues which may impact on children continue. Appraisals are not undertaken within timescale. Therefore, managers have missed an opportunity to develop the practice of some of their long-standing members of staff.

A complaint from a parent was not fully investigated and it took two months for the parent to receive the outcome. The concern raised about the care of the child was not fully considered. Therefore, the potential need for staff disciplinary measures and/or training has not been identified. This places children at risk of harm or poor care.

The manager does not have sufficient oversight of the service, or monitors the home effectively. As a result, children's care plans are not up to date and do not include clear strategies for staff to follow to promote the safety and well-being of children. For one child, this also means that their health needs are not monitored. This places the child at risk of significant harm.

The manager does not respond to recommendations made by the independent visitor in a timely way. Shortfalls are often repeated, and this demonstrates a lack of learning or commitment to improve the service.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— 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 child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c))	18 May 2022
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))	18 May 2022
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff—	18 May 2022

help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment; raise any need for further assessment or specialist provision in relation to a child with the child's education or training provider and the child's placing authority; and help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible; help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(iv)(vii)(viii)(x))	
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b))	18 May 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 the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(b))*	3 April 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	3 April 2022

promotes their welfare. 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; 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; ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child; and 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)(c)(d)(e)(h))*	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that impact risk assessments are completed for each child prior to their admission and consider any training needs for the staff team.	18 May 2022
The registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected; children can access all appropriate areas of the children’s home’s premises; and any limitation placed on a child’s privacy or access to any area of the home’s premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and	18 May 2022

allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	
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; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and 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)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c)(d))*	3 April 2022
The registered person must— ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction. 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 (1)(a) (4)(a)(b)(c))	18 May 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))	18 May 2022
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(b)(c))	18 May 2022
The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (3))	18 May 2022

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

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: 2625941

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Huntercombe Young People Ltd

Registered provider address: Morton House, Morton Road, Darlington DL1 4PT

Responsible individual: Maureen Richardson

Registered manager: Lorraine Harding

Inspector

Emma Ridley, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022