

2645858

Registered provider: Helpful Investments Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a private provider. The home is registered to provide care for up to three children who may experience social or emotional difficulties. At the time of this inspection, there were two children living in the home.

The registered manager post is vacant. There is an acting manager in post who intends to apply to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 31 August and 1 September 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 and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 23 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/03/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

There are serious shortfalls in relation to care planning, safeguarding practice and the leadership and management of the home. These weaknesses have had a significant effect on children's safety and welfare and have resulted in negative experiences and inadequate progress for children.

Children's care plans are of poor quality and do not include information from children's other relevant plans. Staff do not know and understand children's individual needs. Children are therefore not receiving well-planned care that promotes their safety and well-being.

Ineffective decision-making in relation to the admission of one child resulted in significant disruption for all children. The manager and staff did not put in place clear strategies to support the child and did not manage the child's known risks and behaviours effectively. The child had to move out of the home suddenly and in distressing circumstances.

Children's health needs are not being met by staff at the home. Inadequate care planning in relation to children's health needs has led to poor outcomes for children. Some identified health needs, such as those on children's health reports, have not been addressed. For example, one child has not received all their recommended immunisations. Furthermore, the manager and staff do not have a clear understanding of the medication that children have been prescribed to support their physical and emotional health.

Relationships between children and staff are not always positive. One child said that staff are not open and honest with them about rules and boundaries. This has affected children's ability to form trusting relationships with staff. When a child made a complaint about a staff member, it was not adequately addressed. This does not evidence that children are being listened to or that children and staff are being supported to develop positive relationships.

Children are not receiving help and support to maintain good routines. Staff have failed to implement appropriate structure and boundaries for children. Poor routines have had a negative effect on children's daily experiences and have had an impact on children leading healthy lifestyles.

One child has maintained their school attendance since the last inspection. Another child has not been in education or training since moving into the home. Staff and the manager cannot show how they have supported this child to engage with education. The child has not consistently engaged with their home tutor. Leaders and the manager have failed to challenge professionals effectively or coordinate a review of the plan for this child. These shortfalls in planning have contributed to the

child finishing secondary education without any qualifications or an identified plan for further education or training.

Children live in a spacious home that is adequately furnished. There have been recent improvements to decoration in some areas. However, other areas of the home, such as children's bedrooms and bathrooms, are not maintained to an acceptable standard of cleanliness or repair.

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

Risk management plans lack clarity about the risks to children. Managers are failing to provide staff with sufficiently clear information that enables them to manage children's risks and vulnerabilities safely and effectively. In the absence of clear guidance, staff have not taken effective action in response to safeguarding incidents, which leaves children at risk of suffering harm.

The process for storing and administering medication is not robust and does not safeguard children. Staff do not know what medication children should have or what the correct dosage is. Leaders, the manager and staff failed to ensure that a child had access to their medication or appropriate help and support to address their health needs. This lack of support resulted in the child suffering harm.

There are risks to children from smoking. Staff are not consistent in how they support children to reduce this risk. On some occasions, staff have not challenged children effectively when they were smoking in the home. There have been some occasions when staff have enabled children to smoke, either by allowing them to use staff lighters or by giving them money to purchase lighters.

Risk management is unnecessarily restrictive in some instances and resulted in the routine deprivation of one child's liberty. These restrictions have not been agreed by the local authority. In the absence of the correct authorisation, these restrictions have not been approved and are not subject to continual review.

Staff have struggled to implement routines and boundaries in the home. Staff do not have the skills to manage children's behaviours, and incidents have escalated due to inconsistent and inappropriate staff practice. On some occasions, staff have required police involvement to manage children's behaviour. Reliance on the police to de-escalate incidents has led to one child facing being criminalised for their behaviour. Shortfalls in the manager's oversight of these incidents mean that ineffective staff practice has continued.

Staff are not supporting children to understand acceptable behaviour. Incidents of children using discriminatory language and engaging in bullying behaviour are not challenged appropriately. This lack of support does not help children to understand or improve their behaviour and does not support children who have experienced bullying.

Physical intervention practice is not safely supporting children who are experiencing crisis in their lives. Records do not contain the detail that is required by regulation. For example, children and staff do not have the opportunity to reflect on incidents that have occurred. This is a missed opportunity to seek children's views about the restraint and for staff to learn from incidents to prevent these from reoccurring.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager post has been vacant since August 2022. The current manager intends to apply to register with Ofsted.

There are shortfalls in the management oversight of significant incidents. Poor staff practice leaves children inadequately cared for. Staff have not responded effectively to safeguarding incidents in the home, which leaves children at risk of suffering harm.

The manager and responsible individual have not monitored and reviewed the quality of care provided to children effectively. There are significant shortfalls in care planning which have not been addressed. This has resulted in children's health and education needs not being met.

The manager and responsible individual have failed to provide robust oversight of recruitment processes. Staff have started working in the home without sufficient references being scrutinised and verified. One staff member had started working with children without a suitable Disclosure and Barring Service certificate. This unsafe practice does not safeguard children.

Staff do not have the skills and experience to meet the needs of children living in the home. Despite their inexperience, staff are not yet receiving regular practice-based supervision. Staff have not been trained in all areas relevant to children's needs, and managers have poor oversight of training records. This is not supporting the development of good practice or improving the quality of care provided to children.

There has been an inadequate response to complaints raised by external professionals and children. This does not evidence that leaders and managers are improving their practice based on feedback received.

Despite a requirement made at the last inspection, the manager has not provided an updated statement of purpose to Ofsted within expected timescales.

The manager does not make effective use of internal or external monitoring systems, which means that areas for improvement are not always identified or addressed. The manager has not notified Ofsted of a significant event. This does not support effective monitoring and therefore compromises children's welfare and safety.

Due to the safeguarding concerns, Ofsted is of the view that if further children move

into the home this would compromise the safety of the children already living there, as well as the safety of any new children moving in. Based on the information outlined above, a notice of restriction of accommodation at the home has been issued.

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 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— 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; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; 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; 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. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(iv)(v)(vii)(viii))	9 October 2022
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; and	9 October 2022

children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child’s relevant plans; understand the child’s health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child’s health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child’s age and understanding; understand and develop skills to promote the child’s well-being. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iv)) Specifically, the registered person should ensure that children’s identified health needs, such as those identified in children looked after health assessments, are met. Additionally, the registered person should ensure that staff understand children’s individual health needs and support children to lead healthy lifestyles through good routines.	
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;	9 October 2022

communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; strive to gain each child's respect and trust; understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iv)(v)(vii)(ix)(x)(xi)(xii)(xiii))	
*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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(v)(vi))	9 October 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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; 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)(b)(c)(g)(ii)(h))	9 October 2022
*The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— ensure the effective induction of each child into the home; manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and that each child's relevant plans are followed; (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(i)(c)) Specifically, the registered person should ensure that:	9 October 2022

robust assessments are made prior to moving children into the home; the assessments outline how staff will manage the potential impact of children moving into the home; the assessments should consider whether the staff working in the home have the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the needs of potential new children.	
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	9 October 2022
Restraint in relation to a child is only permitted for the purpose of preventing— injury to any person (including the child); serious damage to the property of any person (including the child); or a child who is accommodated in a secure children's home from absconding from the home. Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)) Specifically, the registered person should ensure that there are no restrictions on children being able to leave the home, unless this is directed for safeguarding reasons and the appropriate authority is in place.	9 October 2022

The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23 (1)) Specifically, the registered person should ensure that children's records detail the correct medication and the correct dosage. Children must only administer their own medication if this is in accordance with the local authority plans for the child's care and is thoroughly risk assessed.	9 October 2022
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)) Specifically, this relates to the use of external door alarms.	9 October 2022
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— 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)(d)) Specifically, that references obtained are on file and have been scrutinised prior to an individual starting work, and that staff are not permitted to start working with children until	9 October 2022

their Disclosure and Barring Service certificate has been viewed and verified by the registered person.	
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 keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and 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; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3)(a)(iii)(iv)(v)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) Specifically, ensure that all incidents of restraint are recorded, including the occasions when staff use 'guiding' techniques.	9 October 2022

The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	9 October 2022
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to— HMCI. (Regulation 44 (1) (4)(a)(b) (7))	9 October 2022

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. This relates to the use of words such as 'resident', 'curfew' and 'absconding'. ('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: 2645858

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Helpful Investments Limited

Registered provider address: 31 Bridge Street, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 1QB

Responsible individual: Lesley Hearne

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Emma Thornton, Social Care Inspector

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