

2675297

Registered provider: Closer 2 Home Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private provider operates this home. It provides care for up to four children with social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties due to past trauma.

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

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 October 2022

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: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Not previously inspected

Inspection judgements

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

Staff and the acting manager do not ensure that sufficient action is taken to progress some aspects of children's care. Children's care plans are not regularly reviewed or updated. For example, staff and the manager were not fully aware of a child's medical needs and that the child potentially required further appointments to help address this. Positively, the child does not require further medical intervention.

Staff and the acting manager were not fully aware of interventions that children had received in the past and if specialist agencies were still involved. They have not taken action to escalate a statutory health review that is out of timescale, and one child's education, health and care plan assessment has not been completed in a timely manner. The lack of oversight of children's care may result in poor outcomes for them.

Leaders and the acting manager ensure that the matching of children being admitted to the home is well considered, together with the impact on the children who are already living there. However, the recording of impact risk assessments is poor and does not evidence how leaders and managers have reached their conclusion. Placement planning meetings are held when children are admitted to the home but these are not recorded on children's files. Consequently, this impacts on the effective planning of children's care.

Three children live in the home. They are making progress and they describe positive relationships with the staff who look after them. Children are supported to have good routines and structure. The consistent and clear expectations for children are ensuring that they continue to make good progress.

Children's education is valued. Children who have previously struggled with school attendance are supported to improve this. One child's school reported that the home has been instrumental in achieving positive outcomes for them. In addition, the home has continued to advocate for a child who has been permanently excluded from school. This ensures that children have opportunities to make progress in their education.

Staff value children's relationships with their friends and families. Families speak positively of the care provided to children and the communication from the home. They say that they feel involved in the children's care and family participation is supported where possible. This ensures that children continue to maintain relationships with the people who are important to them.

Children are making progress in the home. They are supported to develop independent living skills. Staff have creatively supported children who have struggled with meeting some aspects of their personal care. In addition, children

engage in a wide range of activities, hobbies and interests. Children are acquiring new skills and developing their confidence.

Professionals speak highly of the care provided to the children and the progress that they have made in the home. They say that effective communication and commitment from staff have ensured that children are well looked after. Children are being cared for by staff who are supporting them to continue to do well.

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

Overall, staff mostly manage children's risks well, but the quality of risk assessments is variable. They do not provide staff with sufficient guidance and strategies to ensure that children are kept safe. For example, staff maintain regular contact with children when they spend free time in the community, but risk assessments do not include how free time should be managed or supported. Some risk assessments are not regularly updated and therefore staff are not able to measure children's progress through regular reviews of their risks. In addition, the use of bedroom door alarms is not regularly reviewed. This impacts on the effectiveness of risk management plans.

Leaders and staff lack professional curiosity around monitoring the safe use of children's internet-enabled devices. There are some arrangements in place that reduce risks to children, however, the home is not assured that children are safe online when using their devices. This does not ensure that risks to children are monitored effectively.

Leaders and the manager do not inform the regulator of serious incidents relating to children. The regulator is therefore not able to review actions taken by the home to ensure that sufficient action is taken to ensure the safety of children.

Children receive regular rewards, but these are not being recorded consistently by staff. Staff are also not consistently recording consequences imposed on children. This impacts on the effective monitoring of behaviour management strategies in the home.

Staff take sufficient action when they have concerns about children's substance misuse. For example, room checks are carried out in accordance with one child's risk assessment and key-work sessions take place to support the child to understand the risks. However, staff are not proactive in ensuring that children are referred to specialist agencies to help reduce the risks or to address potential concerns around criminal exploitation. Staff are not taking a holistic approach to address risks to children.

Overall, incidents of children going missing from the home are managed well. For example, staff have developed good relationships with one child's network of friends and family to ensure that there is good communication when the whereabouts of the child are unknown. Staff also maintain regular contact with children and welfare checks are carried out where possible. However, the recording of incidents of

children going missing is variable and independent return interviews are not taking place when children have been missing. This hinders effective safeguarding practice.

Children say that they feel safe in the home. They can identify adults who they can speak to if they have any worries. In addition, children are supported to understand their risks and why staff have implemented specific actions to ensure their safety. Physical restraint is not used in the home, and staff use the relationships that they have developed with children to promote positive behaviour and de-escalate serious incidents. Children are looked after by adults who know them well.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The previous registered manager resigned shortly after the home was registered with Ofsted. An acting manager was in post and their commitment to children has been evident in the outcomes achieved for children. However, their lack of experience and inconsistent oversight have resulted in ineffective monitoring and reviewing systems. Consequently, failings were found in the leadership and management of the home. A new interim manager has been appointed; they are yet to register with Ofsted. They have shown good insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They are aware of the shortfalls and have developed an action plan, which has yet to be implemented.

The independent visitor's report has not supported effective external monitoring systems. It has failed to provide a good overview and review of the care provided to children. In addition, actions from the visit have not supported the continuous improvement of staff's practice and the quality of care provided to children. Leaders and the manager have identified that this is not an effective system and have therefore made some changes to ensure that it is made more effective.

The statement of purpose is not regularly reviewed or updated. This does not reflect the details of new staff working in the home or staff who have now left. This is a further reflection of poor oversight of the home.

Staff, including temporary staff, speak positively of working in the home. Supervisions are well recorded, but these are not happening regularly. As a result, leaders and the manager are not taking action in a timely manner when staff are reporting concerns or feeling overwhelmed by their work.

Staff are passionate and committed to the children, but their lack of experience has impacted on some aspects of their practice. For example, the home's therapeutic model is not consistently embedded in practice. Staff have not received training related to children's specific risks, including training in caring for children who misuse substances or are at risk of county lines exploitation. This oversight may result in staff not being adequately skilled and knowledgeable to understand and manage risks to children.

The manager is not ensuring that sufficient safer recruitment checks are being carried out on temporary staff. They are therefore not assured that relevant checks have been completed of all adults working with children.

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— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; protect and promote each child's welfare; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2) (a)(b)(i)(ii)(iv)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that children's care plans are updated and reviewed regularly. In addition, they must ensure that children's care plans are understood by all staff and that sufficient action is taken to ensure that actions are progressed in a timely manner. Leaders and managers must ensure that they escalate issues with other professionals and the local authority when there are concerns that children's care plans are not being progressed. In addition, they must ensure that children's relevant documents are all kept in their individual files.	17 February 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; 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)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that children’s risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated. These must reflect all risks to children and provide staff with strategies to manage them. In addition, managers must ensure that the use of bedroom door alarms is reviewed. Leaders and the manager must ensure that children are safeguarded effectively when using their internet-enabled devices. In addition, they must ensure that children are referred to specialist agencies where appropriate. Staff must ensure that independent return interviews are offered to all children after they have been missing from the home.	17 February 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—	17 February 2023

helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and 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; 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) (2)(a)(c)(f)(h)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff are sufficiently trained and skilled to support the children in the home. Leaders and the manager must ensure that there are effective internal and external monitoring and reviewing systems.	
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))	17 February 2023

In particular, the registered person must ensure that safer recruitment checks are completed in respect of all temporary staff who work in the home.	
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; 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)(d)(i)(ii)(e)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that the regulator is informed of all serious events in the home.	17 February 2023
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. A visit by the independent person to the home may be unannounced. 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's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. (Regulation 44 (1) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))	13 January 2023

In particular, the registered person must ensure that the independent visitor's report is an effective monitoring tool. The actions from the report must support continuous improvement of the quality of care provided to children and help improve staff's practice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home's statement of purpose is kept under review. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)
- The registered person should ensure that staff record all rewards and consequences imposed on children. Leaders and the manager must ensure that these are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure their use is fair and appropriate. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)
- The registered person should ensure that impact risk assessments make clear that they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plan. They must ensure that they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children, alongside the experience and skills of staff to meet all the children's needs. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.5)
- The registered person should ensure that they maintain good employment practice. They must ensure that supervision of staff is regular, supportive and reflective and that this minimises 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 ensuring that children's records are clear, accurate and objective. ('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: 2675297

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Closer 2 Home Limited

Registered provider address: 1 Newington Close, Coventry CV6 1PQ

Responsible individual: Howard Woolfenden

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Mazviita Makiyi, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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