

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.

An acting manager is in post due to the registered manager being absent from the home.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 September 2023

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	requires improvement to be good
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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: 19 October 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/10/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of the inspection, three children were living in the home. Since the last inspection, one child has moved out. They returned to live with their family. The child told the inspector that they felt happy and safe when they lived at the home. Two children who are siblings have lived in the home together for a year. There are plans in place for them to return to live with their family. Staff have been visiting the children to support their transition. The children's parent said that staff have been helping them to settle the children in. The manager and staff are very proud that these children are able to reunite with their family.

Staff support children to spend time with their family. Staff work with parents to ensure that this time is safe and in the children's best interests. This helps children to maintain and develop their relationships with family members. It also helps professionals to progress children's long-term care plans. As a result, children maintain lifelong links and achieve stability.

Complaints are inconsistently managed and investigated. Children know how to make a complaint, however, when children complain, it is not always clear who has spoken to the child. This reduces the effectiveness of investigations. As a result, children may not trust that staff will always listen to them if they have any worries or concerns.

Staff support children to remain in education. Before they moved into the home, one child had not attended school for three years. They recently sat their GCSEs and gained a place at college. Staff escalate their concerns when there are delays for children's education. However, staff do not always follow the correct process when doing so. This has led to one child's school advising that they cannot meet the child's needs. This is because they did not receive relevant information before the child joined the school. Nevertheless, one professional said that staff should be 'commended' for being 'proactive'.

Staff build positive relationships with children. They know children and their needs well. Children enjoy spending time with staff. They engage in activities such as swimming. Staff help children to develop a positive sense of their identity. One child said that she likes the staff's cooking, as this reminds her of her family. This keeps the child's positive memories alive, which makes her feel happy.

Staff support children to learn age-appropriate independence skills. This includes helping them to budget and prepare their own meals, and learning how to travel independently. These valuable life skills will help children to live independently in the future.

The home environment has improved. The home is bright and spacious. Children have chosen colours to redecorate some of the rooms. As a result, children feel comfortable and have a sense of belonging.

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

Staff do not always take appropriate action when children go missing from the home. They do not always attempt to maintain contact with children when they are missing. One child was missing for several hours overnight and staff did not try to contact them. However, staff did report the child as missing to the police. In addition, there are discrepancies in the recording of incidents of children going missing. This compromises the manager's oversight of these incidents.

Staff do not always keep in touch with children when they spend time in the community. This means staff are not aware of where children are and who they are with. In one example, staff did not contact a child who had left the home for several hours. The child later contacted staff to inform them that they had travelled to another city. Staff were concerned that the child was under the influence of substances. Due to where the child was, there were delays in staff being able to take swift action to safeguard them.

Risk assessments do not contain all known risks to children. This is because they are not always updated. Some information is inaccurate and irrelevant to the risks posed to children. As a result, staff are not always provided with the most up-to-date information about children's risks.

Staff have important discussions with some children to help them understand online risks. This is because the risks of exploitation for these children are high. Staff use key-work sessions effectively to encourage them to make safe choices.

Since the last inspection, one child's self-harming behaviour has reduced. This child has now developed safer ways to respond to and manage their feelings. Professionals describe this child as 'much calmer' since they have been living at the home. Staff respond well to incidents of self-harm and follow self-harm safety plans. They ensure that children receive medical attention.

Staff support children to reduce substance use. They work well with external agencies to help them to do so. Staff are able to identify triggers and signs in children's behaviours that may be a worry. They help children to develop healthier ways to manage their feelings. When there are concerns about substances, staff are non-judgemental. They carry out appropriate checks to ensure that children are safe. They also provide children with appropriate emotional support to prevent substance use.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The home has recently been through a period of instability. The registered manager is on maternity leave and the interim manager has recently left. The deputy manager is managing and overseeing the home. However, the provider has appointed a new interim manager.

Managers have recently recruited new staff and recruitment checks are ongoing. Although the recruitment of staff has improved, gaps in employment are not always consistently considered.

Despite some vacancies in the staff team, most staff remain committed. As a result, children receive care from staff who they know, which helps them to feel safe and secure. Senior staff members are very experienced and skilled. They design and use their own audit tools to oversee the day-to-day running of the home.

Not all staff receive training that is pertinent to children's individual needs. Some training is out of date, including training around substance misuse and self-injurious behaviour. Managers cannot be assured that all staff have the skills to safely care for each child without the relevant training.

Staff do not receive consistent supervision. This is a missed opportunity for staff to reflect on and develop their practice. However, team meetings are held and the deputy manager is creative in helping staff understand the links between trauma and children's behaviours. This is a positive area of practice.

The most recent quality of care report is not evaluative. The action plan was not reflective of the areas for development in the home. Leaders and managers have recently implemented new monitoring and reviewing tools. This will enable them to understand the quality of care that children receive.

Leaders and managers take appropriate action when there are concerns about staff conduct. However, some investigations records do not include all actions and the timeline of events is unclear. However, this did not impact on children's safety. Leaders and managers rectified this during the inspection.

Managers do not always notify or update the regulator when serious incidents occur. This compromises the external scrutiny of the home.

The location risk assessment contains all known risks in relation to the local area. Managers consider well the risks to children, such as exploitation. The manager liaises with external agencies to ensure that the assessment is thorough. This assessment helps to identify local support for children in relation to their needs.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph 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; that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(e)(vii)) In particular, ensure that managers review and update children's risk assessments to ensure they contain all pertinent information about known risks to children. Managers should ensure that all staff understand children's risk assessments, in particular the strategies they should	21 December 2023

implement to help keep children safe. This includes when children are missing or when they spend time in the community. Managers should also ensure that staff help and support all children to keep safe when online. Leaders and managers should also ensure that they liaise with and notify without delay external professionals such as the local authority designated officer when necessary.	
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; 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; 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)(c)(f)(g)(ii)(h)) In particular, ensure that staff receive the appropriate training to ensure that they have the skills and abilities to meet the needs of the children they care for, in particular, training in relation to substance use and child criminal exploitation. Leaders and managers should ensure that they have effective systems in place to consistently monitor and review the quality of care children receive. In addition, that these	21 December 2023

systems include finding out children's views, wishes and feelings.	
The registered person must— The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; (Regulation 33 (1) (4)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that all staff, including the manager, receive regular supervision of their practice. A detailed record of supervision should be completed which details discussion and includes clear actions for staff to take to further their professional development.	21 December 2023
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(b)(e)) In particular, that the provider ensures prompt notification to HMCI of a serious event.	21 December 2023
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and	21 December 2023

any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children.

After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report").

The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff.
(Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (5))

In particular, that the registered manager ensures that they gather the views, wishes and feelings of children and professionals to incorporate into their review of the quality of care children receive. In addition, ensuring that the report is evaluative and identifies meaningful actions for continuous improvement.

Recommendation

- 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. This also applies to staff recruitment records. ('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: Kelsey Franklin

Inspector

Sarah Berry, Social Care Inspector

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