

2737729

Registered provider: Cannon Children Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a private provider.

The home is registered to provide care for up to two children who may have social and emotional difficulties.

One child was living at the home at the time of inspection and one child had recently left the home.

There was no registered manager in position at the time of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 September 2024

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: 27 February 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/02/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Children's experiences of being cared for by staff are mixed. Although one child is making some progress, staff were unable to meet the needs of the child who recently left. This resulted in the child needing to move out.

There are not appropriate systems in place to explore the suitability of children moving to the home and the impact that this could have on those already living there. Historical concerns about a child's involvement in criminality and substance misuse were not carefully considered, and there was therefore no plan around how this risk could be safely managed upon admission. The manager was not professionally curious about gaps in referral information and did not have adequate information to make an informed decision about the staff's capacity to meet the child's needs fully.

Children's care plans are convoluted and miss important or updated information. For one child this meant that important information about their sexual health had been omitted. Care plans for children do not follow a consistent format, which makes them more difficult for staff to understand.

There have not always been timely referrals to specialist services for children when required. For one child, an increase in behaviours that could cause them harm was not quickly referred to child mental health services. This prevented timelier intervention, and incidents of this nature have continued. When specialist services do become involved, senior leaders are not proactive in understanding the work completed with children, the impact of this work, or how this could inform care planning within the home.

Children have experienced several changes to staffing, including managers. Information about these changes has not always been clearly communicated to children, and children have therefore not experienced positive endings to these relationships.

Staff are building relationships with children; they do activities with them and support them to spend time with their families. Staff listen to what children say and plan, where possible, to meet their requests.

The home is well presented. One child described liking their bedroom and how it was decorated. They said that they liked being cared for by staff.

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

There are shortfalls in how well children have been supported by staff to recognise risks and stay safe.

One child had a deprivation of liberty order in place while living at the home. Information about this court order was not well communicated to staff, which negatively affected staff's ability to keep the child safe. Despite this child having a deprivation of liberty order, they had a pattern of regularly going missing from the home. Staff were unable to stop this from happening.

Risk assessments for the children are not clear and are spread over several documents. There is a lack of clarity for staff about where they can access the most up-to-date or relevant documentation. Risk assessments lack specific and pragmatic advice for staff on how to manage issues such as smoking and one child's vulnerability to criminal exploitation. This raises concerns about staff being able to easily access important information about their expected response to situations where children could be in danger.

The manager has not ensured that staff have followed agreed plans to keep children safe. Recommended room searches of children's bedrooms have not been completed regularly. This is despite there being concerns that dangerous items or substances might have been brought into the home, and where there were escalating concerns of a child self-harming.

There were two serious incidents that were not reported to Ofsted. One of these incidents was not reported to the local authority designated officer. This undermines overall safeguarding practice.

For one child, there has been a reduction in some of their risk-taking behaviours. Staff have been consistent in some behaviour management approaches, which has enabled one child to reflect on their actions and coping strategies. Although this is positive, children are not consistently spoken with following incidents so that their perspective can be understood and reflected on.

Overall, although staff are working hard to try to keep children safe, the leadership of the home is poor and is not providing sufficient guidance or oversight to staff to enable them to do this effectively.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Staff have not been offered consistent senior managerial support in the absence of a registered manager. Geographical separation between the home, interim manager and responsible individual has meant that staff have not had the practical or direct support needed during recent periods of challenge. This is particularly concerning as the home does not currently have any qualified staff working there.

Ofsted cannot be assured that appropriate action is being taken by staff and the manager to respond to risk effectively. This is because two serious incidents were not shared with Ofsted. When notifications have been submitted, they have often been delayed.

The management of allegations, complaints and staff practice concerns is not robust. Appropriate investigations of concerns are not always completed or recorded fully by the manager or responsible individual. Therefore, it was not possible to be sure that all allegations or complaints made by children have been explored fully. There is not sufficient evidence to suggest that senior leaders are learning from incidents so that they can support staff practice to improve.

There was inappropriate language used by one manager during a discussion with a child following a missing incident. This did not reassure the child that staff were taking their concerning behaviour seriously.

Management oversight of documents is sporadic. Some oversight has celebrated staff practice when the protocol for when children go missing was not followed effectively. The current auditing process of the home is not completed by a manager. This is a missed opportunity to recognise trends and patterns in behaviours and adapt practices to improve the care being offered.

The responsible individual does not have appropriate oversight or understanding of the home or the actions of the manager. There is an over reliance on conversations or delegations of tasks to other staff members. There are no assurances that appropriate action is being taken to maintain the standards of care or offer challenge when required. A lack of appropriate quality assurance systems means that the progress of children in the home is not fully understood by managers.

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 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 children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, seek timely advice, treatment and support when young people display a deterioration in their mental health or are engaging in behaviour that could cause them harm.	4 November 2024
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; 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;	4 November 2024

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; that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(e)) In particular, ensure that children have clear and detailed risk assessments that staff can understand and implement. Risk assessments should include known information, particularly where this relates to deprivation of liberty orders. This also relates to the need for staff to follow advice around regular room searches, and for staff to be proactive in escalating safeguarding concerns to external agencies.	
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— 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)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)(h)) In particular, ensure that there are robust quality assurance and monitoring systems in place that are used regularly and recorded. This also refers to the need for there to be clear	4 November 2024

support and guidance for staff in the absence of a registered manager, and for the manager to ensure there are appropriately qualified and experienced staff working at the home at all times.	
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 each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)) This particularly refers to ensuring that there are clear systems in place to ensure the suitability of children coming to live at the home, and that all children have a plan that staff can work to, to ensure that children are helped and protected and their welfare is promoted at all times.	4 November 2024
If the registered provider is an organisation, the organisation must ensure that the responsible individual undertakes such continuing professional development as is necessary to ensure that the responsible individual has the skills needed for supervising the management of the home. (Regulation 29 (2)) In particular, ensure that the responsible individual has the skills and understanding to quality assure and oversee the home, particularly when there is no registered manager.	4 November 2024
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—	4 November 2024

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)) This particularly refers to ensuring that all relevant incidents are reported to Ofsted without delay.	
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must establish a procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children. The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. The registered person must supply to HMCI, at HMCI's request, a statement containing a summary of any complaints made during the preceding twelve months and the action that was taken in response to each complaint. (Regulation 39 (1) (3) (5)) In particular, ensure that there is a clear system for investigating, recording and responding to complaints and allegations made by children.	4 November 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming, supportive and provides appropriate boundaries in relation to their behaviour. Homes must also meet children's basic day-to-day needs and physical necessities. Staff should seek to meet the child's basic needs in the way that a good parent would, recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where these needs have not been consistently met – doing so is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care for the child and value them as an individual. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

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: 2737729

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Cannon Children Services Ltd

Registered provider address: 2 Calais Hill, Tyler Hill, Canterbury CT2 9LT

Responsible individual: Dauty Ndhlovu

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Louise Copping, Social Care Inspector

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