

2738013

Registered provider: Serenity Care Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care for up to three children aged seven to 17 with social and emotional difficulties. Two children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The home was registered with Ofsted in April 2024. This is the first inspection of the home.

There has been no registered manager since September 2024.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 October 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected and their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

The overall judgement of this home is inadequate, due to failings in how well children are helped and protected, and in the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the home. These shortfalls mean that children do not receive consistently positive experiences and their safety is not promoted.

Children have positive relationships with staff. Interactions between children and staff are warm. Staff consider well the different needs of the children that relate to their different ages and are sensitive to their emotional needs. Staff engage children in storytelling to help them learn about different topics. Children say that they feel confident to talk to staff about topics such as bullying.

There are some indications that children are making progress, but systems to monitor progress are still being developed. This means that systems are not currently as effective as they could or should be in supporting staff to understand how well children are doing and how best to target future support to promote further progress.. Children are encouraged to develop and learn new skills and interests. One child has developed their cooking skills and enjoys experimenting with new recipes. Staff help the children to take steps towards speaking with their families and spending time with them.

Staff have appropriately supported the children to manage conflict between each other when they do not get along. Staff have closely monitored the children's relationships and have helped them to identify common interests and to spend time together to create shared memories.

Children's access to education is promoted well by staff. One child is supported to attend an alternative provision and has a new tutor while a new school is found. Managers work closely with other professionals to create plans for children to have therapeutic support at school.

Staff help children to have positive experiences. Both the children have celebrated their birthdays. One child went to a theme park for their birthday for the first time. Children regularly play football and have been swimming.

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

Concerns about staff conduct are not managed well. One serious concern about a staff member was not shared promptly with the local authority designated officer (LADO). The investigation into the staff member's conduct has not been recorded and there is no rationale for the decision made. When the manager investigated the concern, they did not consider other relevant concerns that had been raised. This means that important

information has not been fully shared with the relevant partner agencies who have a responsibility for safeguarding children.

On another occasion, a child raised a concern about a member of staff's conduct. The child's concerns and the manager's findings have not been shared outside of the organisation. This prevents the LADO and local authority social worker from having oversight of how the concerns are managed.

Management oversight of physical interventions is poor. Records of physical interventions are not scrutinised by the manager and there are no lessons learnt from their use. Some interventions are not proportionate or necessary and this has not been identified by the manager. This means that children have been physically restrained when this could have been avoided or could have been briefer or less intrusive, and that opportunities for reducing the likelihood of future incidents of restraint have not been taken. Record keeping for the use of physical interventions is poor and the actions taken by staff are not clear. The record of one incident indicates that a child sustained 'blows' to their head during the incident. No medical attention was sought, and the child was not checked or monitored following the incident. One new member of staff used a physical intervention on two occasions before it was identified that they did not have up-to-date training to do so. The use of physical restraint by staff who have not received appropriate training places children at risk of physical harm.

Behaviour support plans to help staff to manage the children's behaviour have not been updated promptly following significant incidents. Staff used a physical intervention with one child that was not agreed in the behaviour support plan. Following the incident, the plan was not updated to reflect the learning from the incident, any new risks identified and the model of restraint that should be used. This leaves staff with inconsistent and out-of-date information about how to care for children safely.

There is poor management of recruitment. One new staff member started working in the home before their Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check was reviewed. There was no risk assessment or plan in place to mitigate this risk.

The environment is not safe for children. A child's bed was broken, with wooden slats sticking out of it. This was left in their bedroom for over 24 hours without it being made safe. This had not been checked by the leaders of the home, despite being aware it was broken. The garden shed posed a risk to staff and children; several large items of furniture were placed on top of a child's bike. There was no lock on the shed, despite managers being aware that it was unlocked for several weeks.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager left suddenly in September 2024. They did not say goodbye to the children and staff or inform professionals that they had left. A new manager has been appointed and has applied to register with Ofsted. The new manager has identified some of the shortfalls identified in the inspection and is working to address these. They have had a positive impact on the staff team, providing clearer direction.

An unstable staff team has unsettled the children. Several key staff have left without saying goodbye to children. Leaders have not undertaken exit interviews to explore the reasons why they have left and to enable them to improve staff retention.

The quality of care plans to support staff in meeting the children's needs is poor. The plans are lengthy, which makes the information harder to absorb. The information in the care plans is not always clear and creates confusion about the children's needs. One child is described as having 'significant sensory sensitivities', but it is not clear what these are and how staff should help and support the child.

Record keeping is ineffective. Key information about the care and safety of children has not been recorded or is hard to find. Language used in recordings is often ambiguous, making incidents and events hard to understand. It was recorded that a child was 'escorted' to their room, when, in fact, the staff member watched them go to their room. Some of the language used in records is negative about the children. The new manager has identified this as an area for development and is helping staff to improve their record keeping.

Staff have not had supervision and new staff have not had probation reviews, this is not in accordance with the home's policy. The new manager has these booked in and the quality of supervisions has improved since their arrival.

Staff have undertaken the mandatory training required for their role. However, not all staff have had training in the specific needs of the children such as autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

The quality and effectiveness of planning for children moving into the home is inconsistent. One child was supported through outreach work before moving into the home, which led to a successful introduction. The second child moved in quickly and the staff had limited information about the child before they arrived. When the manager considered the children's needs, they missed an opportunity to explore the support that the children might need to develop their relationship.

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 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— 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 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 premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health.(Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(ii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(d))In particular, the registered person must fully investigate concerns and allegations about staff practice. These concerns should be shared with the local authority promptly. In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff identify and act on health and safety concerns in the home to ensure that the home is safe for children.	31 October 2024

In particular, staff should take effective action if a child is injured, taking into account the nature of the injury and age of the child.	
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; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(e)(f)) In particular, monitoring systems should ensure that actions are taken in response to safeguarding concerns. In particular, children's plans should be clear and accessible to enable staff to provide consistent care. Children's plans should include up-to-date information following incidents. In particular, staff should be trained in the specific needs of the children. In particular, the registered person must ensure staff using physical interventions are trained in line with the organisation's policy. In particular, staff should receive regular supervision and have feedback on their performance. There should be an effective system in place to monitor when staff have received supervisions.	31 October 2024
The registered person must ensure that—	31 October 2024

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 name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; 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 name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; 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 signed the record to confirm it is accurate. (Reg 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii) (b)(ii)) In particular, records of restraint should be of a high quality and detail what actions were taken by staff. In particular, restraint records should be reviewed to ensure that they are correct and scrutinise staff practice. This review should be documented.	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.	31 October 2024

The registered person may permit an individual to start work at the home despite the fact that the requirement in paragraph (3)(d) has not been met if—

the registered person has taken all reasonable steps to obtain full information about each of the matters in Schedule 2 in respect of the individual, but the enquiries in relation to any of the matters in paragraphs 3 to 6 of Schedule 2 are incomplete;

full and satisfactory information in respect of the individual has been obtained in relation to the matters in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 2;

the registered person considers that the circumstances are exceptional; and

the registered person ensures that the individual is appropriately supervised while carrying out the individual's duties, pending receipt of any outstanding information on the matters in paragraphs 3 to 6 of Schedule 2, which is then considered satisfactory by the registered person.
(Reg 32 (1)(7)(a)(b)(c)(d))

In particular, staff do not start working in the home without a DBS being checked.

Recommendations

- The registered person should monitor and review the patterns and trends of staff turnover to understand and, where possible, address any negative trends. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54 paragraph 10.19)
- The registered person should ensure staff use careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information in a non-stigmatising way which is helpful to the child. These records should be accessible to the reader. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62 paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should assess children's needs effectively to fully consider the impact on the children already living in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56 paragraph 11.4)
- The registered person should ensure that children are supported to say goodbye to key staff who work in the home, to reduce the impact on children's stability and emotional wellbeing. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39 paragraph 8.12)

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: 2738013

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Serenity Care Group Limited

Registered provider address: 124 - 128 City Road, London EC1V 2NX

Responsible individual: Keith Riley

Registered manager: Post Vacant

Inspectors

Mark Dawkins, Social Care Inspector
Glen Strowbridge, 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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