

SC005067

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a private organisation and provides medium- to long-term care and accommodation for up to six children and young people who have experienced adverse childhood experiences that have led to associated complex behaviours.

The registered manager left post in July 2020. An interim manager is currently in place. A new manager has been recruited and is due to start in November 2020.

Visit dates: 19 to 20 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 5 March 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Declined in effectiveness

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Staff ensure that children and young people take part in a range of activities that reflect their individual interests. Children and young people enjoy theme nights and games in the home. Staff consult children and young people and organise appropriate activities. They have been creative when COVID-19 restrictions have affected children's and young people's experiences. For example, when one young person was unable to attend her school prom, staff arranged an in-house prom that all the children took part in, enabling them to dress up for the occasion.

The manager and staff support one young person to attend college. The young person told the inspector that staff provide them with good support to maintain their college placement and they now travel independently. A child recently started a new education placement at a specialist school after a prolonged period out of education. The manager ensured that the child's transition was well managed with a phased introduction. This worked very well and the child now attends full time. One child, who is new to the home, does not have an education placement. The manager is appropriately advocating on the child's behalf to ensure that they return to an education provision without delay. News of a place at a school came through on the day of the assurance visit, showing that the manager's efforts have paid off.

Staff consult children and young people regularly about their care. Key-worker sessions provide children and young people with the chance to discuss topics of concern in order to improve the quality of care they receive.

Children's and young people's specific health needs are well managed, and they are supported by staff at medical appointments. Staff regularly review children's and young people's health plans to ensure that they receive care in line with their needs.

The safety of children

The manager has good oversight of the risks to the children and young people. The manager oversees behaviour management plans, incidents and staff practice. On two occasions, a child's behaviour resulted in the police being called to the home. Managers reviewed and reflected on the events with the staff and the children and young people. Plans and strategies are in place to proactively manage and reduce risk.

Good-quality direct work increases children's and young people's understanding about how to keep themselves safe. For example, work around COVID-19 and appropriate precautions has enabled the children and young people to spend time in the community safely and maintain links with friends and family.

Children and young people do not currently go missing from the home. There are appropriate plans in place should this arise. Contextual risks to the children and young people are assessed and discussed in key-worker sessions. For example, one child had received an inappropriate photo message. This was sensitively addressed by staff through a key-worker session to discuss exploitation and consent and how to use the internet safely.

Children and young people in the home can present with behaviours including self-harm, physical aggression and property damage. Staff appropriately manage these behaviours through a combination of effective risk management planning, use of proactive strategies and reflection and debrief following events. For example, one child, who is new to the home, presented many challenging behaviours. Through group discussion, planning and consultation with the child, he has now settled into the home and is making good progress.

Health and safety risks in the physical environment are not always noted by the staff. For example, during the visit, the inspector noticed a broken plug socket in the living room with exposed wires. This posed an unnecessary risk to children and young people and staff. The manager took steps to address this.

Leaders and managers

The interim manager has been in post since July 2020. He is supported by a deputy manager in the home.

The manager maintains good oversight of children's and young people's development and provides regular feedback to social workers and staff about their progress. Following significant incidents, the manager reflects on what has happened. This helps to identify when situations have been managed well and areas for development.

The manager has effective relationships with children's and young people's social workers and key professionals. He challenges professionals when information is not received to inform children's and young people's care and planning. The manager strongly advocates on the children and young people's behalf. An independent reviewing officer commented that the staff are child centred and their knowledge of and communication about the children and young people are excellent.

Effective management oversight of the day-to-day running of the home has improved the quality of care. In-depth document oversight and a review of key performance data enables the manager to review, assess and plan for the home. As a result, the manager continues to develop staff practice and promote children's and young people's welfare.

Staff receive appropriate supervision and support. They continue to work towards achieving the required qualification for their role. However, some staff have not received appropriate training to enable them to fully understand and meet all the

needs of the children and young people. This has the potential to affect their ability to support children's and young people's progress.

The manager makes sure that the children and young people have access to the children's guide and complaints procedure. When children and young people make complaints, the staff and manager report these appropriately. However, one child made a disclosure on admission regarding something that happened where they used to live. Although staff reported this correctly, the child has not had an outcome or response. This failing has the potential to undermine the trust that the child placed in the staff because he does not know what happened as a result of the sensitive information he shared.

The previous manager and the interim manager have acted to ensure that the three recommendations from the monitoring visit have been met. As a result, the quality of recording and risk assessments has improved, and children are helped to behave in a socially acceptable way.

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 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(c))	21/12/20

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- All staff should strive to build positive relationships with children in the home and develop a culture of openness and trust that encourages them to be able to tell someone if they have concerns or worries about their safety. Staff should make

available in the home, information in an appropriate form which enables children to contact their placing authority to call for a review of their care plan if they have concerns about their safety or welfare. Homes should encourage children to understand they can speak to an independent advocate, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), Ofsted inspectors or other relevant persons if they have concerns about their safety. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.11)

In particular, managers should ensure that children receive an outcome when they raise concerns.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC005067

Registered provider: Esland North Limited

Registered provider address: Esland Ltd, Suites 1 & 5 Riverside Business Centre, Foundry Lane, Milford, Belper, Derbyshire DE56 0RN

Responsible individual: Elisabeth Brownlees

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

James Tallis, Social Care Inspector
Jackie Line, Social Care Inspector

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