

SC020611

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It is registered for up to three children aged between 8 and 17 who have experienced adverse childhood experiences that have led to associated trauma and presenting complex behaviours.

The home has a newly appointed manager who has applied to be registered with Ofsted.

Visit dates: 3 to 4 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 18 September 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Good

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 have supported children to understand changes to their routines due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff have been creative in keeping children busy. For example, during the first national lockdown the children were supported to build a fort in the garden and participate in badminton competitions and a mini Olympics.

Staff understand the importance of children's education and actively encourage school attendance. Consequently, children are helped to learn and to have aspirations for their future.

Children have continued to stay in touch with their families. When children have not been able to see their family physically, staff have used technology so that relationships can be maintained and families reassured that their child is safe and well cared for.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, a planned move for a child to adult services was able to go ahead. The child was supported to visit their new placement and helped to purchase new items. As result of this coordinated approach the child has experienced a positive transition.

Managers have maintained one child's placement until a more suitable placement has been found when it was agreed the home was no longer able to meet their needs. Following this placement, a review was undertaken, and learning was identified to ensure that future proposed placements are suitable.

The safety of children

Safety concerns are quickly responded to and prompt action is taken by staff and managers to ensure that children stay safe. For example, when one child continued to damage the smoke detector in their bedroom the manager was quick to secure a tamper-proof version. The manager also ensured that there were waking night staff to give extra supervision until the child moved out.

During periods of national lockdown due to COVID-19, children have complied with the government's restrictions and engaged well with staff. However, once restrictions were lifted one child struggled and their behaviour escalated.

When children have gone missing from the home the staff have been diligent in following children's plans and trying to find them in the local community. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, children have continued to be offered an independent return home interview. This has enabled managers to evaluate and better understand the reasons why children may go missing.

Managers have responded appropriately to children's concerns and complaints. When allegations have been raised, these have been reported to the relevant agencies and investigated. Consequently, children feel listened to.

Leaders and managers

The manager is new to the home and is in the stages of recruiting new senior members of staff to cover vacancies that have emerged in recent months. The departures from the staff team have been among the more knowledgeable and experienced staff. As new staff have arrived their skills and knowledge of children's care plans have been limited and this has led to inconsistency in care. In addition, new staff do not have the same knowledge as previous staff as their training has been limited in recent months. This has led to some children not having early help when they are struggling to self-regulate their behaviour. Consequently, some children are struggling to engage.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, managers have ensured that staff have received regular supervision and team meetings. These opportunities have enabled staff to reflect on their practice and discuss their worries and concerns.

The independent visitor has carried out a mixture of virtual and on-site visits to the home. This has enabled the visitor to closely monitor the progress and well-being of children. This external scrutiny has provided invaluable oversight of the safety and well-being of children living at the home.

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. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)) This relates to ensuring that new staff are clear about children's care plans so that consistency in care is achieved.	29 January 2021

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; (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)) This relates to ensuring that new staff are offered the necessary training to enable them to have the skills and knowledge needed to care for each child.	29 January 2021
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Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC020611

Registered provider: Keys NHCC Limited

Registered provider address: 2nd Floor, Maybrook House, Queensway, Halesowen, Worcestershire B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Christine Bird

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector

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