

SC030677

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by the local authority. It provides short breaks to children and young people who have physical and/or learning disabilities. The home is registered to provide care for up to six children and young people.

Visit dates: 5 to 6 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 24 February 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Not judged

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

The inspector found the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Staff do not follow risk assessments when supporting children to access the community.

- The internal monitoring arrangements are ineffective.
- Induction plans for new staff are not always recorded and effectively planned.
- Supervision of staff is irregular.
- Children's records are not always complete and up to date. Records lack detail.
- Shifts have not always been effectively planned. The registered manager does not regularly audit shift plans to ensure they take into consideration the needs of each child.
- Members of staff did not follow COVID-19 protocols and potentially placed others at risk of infection.

The care of children

The home was closed between 23 March and 10 August 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19. During this time, the home benefited from a full refurbishment and redecoration. The house is now more welcoming and better suited to accommodate and meet the individual needs of the children using the service. Children benefit from the use of specialist equipment and have access to a sensory room and sensory garden.

The members of the staff team currently working in the home are suitably qualified and experienced. Staff know the children in their care well and understand their needs. During this visit, the inspector observed children being welcomed to the home and being supported to choose one of the newly decorated, themed bedrooms. Children were observed playing with specialist equipment. They engaged well with staff and followed their instructions. Children have trusting, secure relationships with staff.

Children's needs are well understood. Staff are supported to understand the children's social, physical, emotional and mental health needs through input from a range of professionals, including social workers and occupational health therapists. Children have individual targets that are aligned to their overall care plans. Records are not always detailed on the steps used by staff to support the children to meet their targets. This makes it difficult to measure progress.

Staff from the home attend and contribute well to care planning meetings and reviews. However, there are significant shortfalls in the registered manager's monitoring of children's records in order to determine any actual progress that children are making.

The safety of children

Despite having protocols to manage COVID-19, staff did not hand over information that is necessary to promote the safety and welfare of children. One child arrived at the home for a short break with a cough. Staff did not follow the home's COVID-19 protocol. They did not follow agreed procedures to take regular temperature checks

from the other children who were using the service at the time and monitor the child with a cough. This could have potentially increased the risk that children could be exposed to the COVID-19 virus.

Children enjoy a range of activities and community outings. The inspector found that not all risk assessments for activities were unavailable at the time of the inspection. Some risk assessments for children's activities lack detail and clarity. They do not always list agreed plans and protocols to follow in case of an emergency. This means that children could be at risk of harm. Record-keeping with regard to the children's overall experience of day-to-day care in the home lacks detail.

All staff receive training and guidance on how to manage challenging behaviours and situations effectively. The use of physical restraint and sanctions is rare, and children do not go missing from the home.

Staff spend time with children and seek their opinions about their care and the home. Children's views on a new colour scheme and furnishings were taken into consideration during the refurbishment planning.

Staff receive safeguarding training through online resources. Staff have a shared understanding about procedures for managing and reporting safeguarding concerns or allegations.

Leaders and managers

Due to the impact of Covid-19 The registered manager has not completed a quality of care review can meet as set out in regulation 45 of the children's home regulations. This is a continuing shortfall which has been raised at inspections in February 2018, December 2018 and June 2019.

Some children's essential records, including placement plans and risk assessments, are out of date and they are not monitored by the registered manager. The inspector examined a range of risk management plans for children during the inspection and found that some need to be updated to reflect the current risks children are exposed to.

Leaders and managers do have some oversight of the day-to-day practice and the well-being of children using the short-break setting. Monitoring of case records is not effective. Some shift plans and children's daily journey forms lack detail.

The impact of Covid-19 has meant some staff have not been able to access formal supervision regularly. The registered manager has introduced an improved induction programme for new care staff to follow. Due to the impact of Covid-19 the newly appointed deputy manager has not formalised an induction plan with the registered manager.

Leaders and managers have not responded effectively to the requirements and recommendations made at the home's last inspection. Three requirements were

made at the last inspection and these have still not been met and additional shortfalls have been identified at this inspection.

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
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 any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (2)(a)(b)(c))	29/11/2020*
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(b)(c))	29/11/2020
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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(h))	29/11/2020
The health and well-being standard is that— (a) the health and well-being needs of children are met; (b) children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and (c) children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c)	29/11/2020
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (i) 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	29/11/2020

child; (b) 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; (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(b))	
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*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC030677

Registered provider: West Berkshire Council

Registered provider address:

**Castle Gate,
Donnington,
Love Lane,
Newbury,
RG142JG**

Responsible individual: Jane Seymour

Registered manager: Michael Garrity

Inspectors

Paul Thomas, Social Care Inspector

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