

SC031479

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home usually provides planned short breaks for up to five children who have complex learning and/or physical disabilities and/or challenging behaviours.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the home has been running a limited and different service. It has been providing short breaks and longer care for disabled children in an emergency, and provides for up to two children at any one time. At the time of this assurance visit, one child lived in the home.

The home has not had a registered manager since June 2018.

This service shares the premises with a similar service for adults. The registered manager and staff work across both provisions. The Care Quality Commission regulates and inspects the adult service.

Visit dates: 27 to 28 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 9 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 build strong positive relationships with children. Staff understand children very well. Staff make sure that children receive personalised care that meets their needs.

Children have positive experiences. One child said that he loves everything about this home. He said that the home is beautiful.

The social worker said that it was the child's choice to stay at this home. Parents reported that their children receive good care and always seem happy at this home.

The physical environment is of exceptional quality. It is spacious, beautifully furnished and equipped to provide a variety of experiences for children, both relaxing and stimulating. The home's spacious garden is proving to be a great resource during the pandemic-related restrictions that are in place.

Staff liaise with schools to provide consistent support to help children to learn and develop. Examples include the use of Makaton, word-puzzles and numerical tasks as well as more creative activities, such as playing the piano. One child said that he never gets bored.

Staff have good partnerships with parents, and the communication is usually good. A problem with the home's telephone land-line has been resolved. Parents were always able to contact the home on a mobile number, but some found the price of the calls prohibitive.

The safety of children

Staff have created a safe and positive environment for children. Staff have inspired trust in children, their parents and social workers. They all reported having full confidence in staff to keep children safe.

Behaviour management practices in the home are effective. Positive relationships, clear structures and firm boundaries help children to feel more secure and be calmer. There have hardly been any incidents of challenging behaviours in the home. This is despite some children's historical and current challenging behaviours when they are in other environments.

Staff follow a clear reporting procedure if a child runs away from the home. There was an incident in which a child was able to leave the home unnoticed. This was despite the high staffing ratios and alarmed doors. Following this incident, staff have put extra control measures in place to ensure that this does not happen again. An investigation is in progress to provide a more detailed analysis and identify any further learning.

The responsible individual has a good oversight of safeguarding concerns. Discussions with the local authority's designated officer for safeguarding take place when there are potential issues about the staff's conduct and practices. Staff understand the role that transparency and honest sharing of information play in safeguarding children. However, it was only during this visit that Ofsted was notified of two significant events which happened earlier in the month.

Leaders and managers

The home has been without a registered manager for over two years. The negative impact of this is most noticeable in the quality of the home's records. The shortfalls in records have not affected the quality of care provided by staff, but the home's paperwork does not evidence the staff's good work.

The processes for internal monitoring and quality assurance of records are ineffective. The poor recording practices include the lack of written behaviour management plans and the lack of specific developmental targets for children on children's files. An example of non-compliance with regulations relates to not recording a complaint from a parent.

In line with the local authority's contingency plan, the home has been adapted to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable families with disabled children. However, the leaders and managers have failed to consider the impact of these changes on the home's statement of purpose. In addition, they have not considered the support needed for staff to understand the various statutory provisions for children in care.

Staff morale is low, and some staff have lost confidence in the effectiveness of the current management arrangements. Despite this, staff have remained committed to children and are able to promote children's positive outcomes. One parent summarised her experience: 'Staff are fantastic, but the same could not be said about the management.'

Leaders and managers have a clear improvement plan. However, the pace of improvement has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. A permanent manager has been appointed and is due to start on 18 November 2020.

The local authority has also appointed more permanent staff to reduce the use of agency staff and the pressure on the current staff members. New staff said that the induction programme has equipped them well for all eventualities in their work. The majority of staff are highly experienced and qualified.

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— 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 work as a team where appropriate; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for 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; 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)(b)(d)(e)(f)(h)) Specifically, the registered person must improve its monitoring and achieve improvement in the quality of the behaviour management plans and care plans so that they reflect staff practices and provide clear guidance to new staff members.	01/03/2021
The registered person must—	01/03/2021

keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b)(5))	
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))	01/03/2021
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(b)(e))	01/03/2021

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC031479

Registered provider: London Borough of Southwark

Registered provider address: Southwark Council, 2nd Floor, 160 Tooley Street,
London SE1 2QH

Responsible individual: Kerry Rabey

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Seka Graovac, Social Care Inspector

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