

SC034851

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home provides care and accommodation for up to five children or young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. There is currently no registered manager, however, an interim manager is in place while recruitment processes are completed. The post has been vacant since May 2020.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 8 July 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 identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Staff do not do enough to prevent young people from going missing from home. Staff do not follow risk management plans in relation to following young people and searching local areas to find them.
- Staff do not have the skills or training to meet the needs of the young people placed.
- Records of complaints, sanctions and restraints are difficult to locate and do not evidence consultation with young people or management oversight.

The care of children

Since the last inspection, young people have not always felt safe in their home. Staff have failed to implement appropriate structure, rules and boundaries and, as a result, young people are not progressing to their full potential.

One young person made a complaint about being bullied. Although the young person moved to another bedroom in order to give some distance between peers, the complaints protocol was not followed. There is no evidence of a response or further work completed to challenge this appropriately.

There have been varying levels of success with education. One young person engages with education but attendance for other young people has been infrequent. Staff do encourage young people to attend school and they work closely with schools to advocate for plans to suit each young person.

Young people have been able to stay in touch with their families during the pandemic. However, contact arrangements have not been supervised in line with agreed plans and this has put young people at risk. Staff have failed to challenge the actions of young people appropriately and, on one occasion, staff purchased the young person a bus ticket, enabling contact which had not been agreed.

Young people spend time with friends and have been on some activities together with peers and staff. One young person engaged with a half-term activity programme which increased his self-confidence and life skills.

Young people attend health appointments on most occasions. One young person who is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder spends a lot of time in his bedroom. Staff have not received appropriate training to meet his needs.

Bedrooms have been personalised and areas of the home have been decorated and feel homely. However, internal locks on the kitchen and living room doors are unnecessary and add an institutionalised feeling to the home. The manager agreed at the visit that they would be removed.

The safety of children

There have been incidents in the home when other young people have entered the home and threatened the residents. It is clear from the incident records that these incidents could have been prevented if staff had followed the risk management plans. The police attended the home in order to keep young people safe. One young person told the inspector that she stays in her bedroom so she can avoid being near another young person.

The police have been called on a number of occasions to manage the young people's behaviour. However, the interim manager has recently met with the police in order to agree expectations. She is challenging a culture in the home that has been formed where staff inappropriately rely on police support.

The interim manager made the decision for one young person to move to a respite placement. This was necessary to safeguard him and the other young people in the home. This has helped to break a cycle of incidents in the home and other young people are beginning to feel safe again.

Young people have been reported missing from home on 117 occasions since April 2020. Staff have failed to follow risk management plans. Managers have failed to identify staff weaknesses and, as a result, young people have continued to be at risk.

Plans were in place for another young person to move in. An impact risk assessment had been completed, but this failed to identify gaps in staff training needs and did not clearly identify plans in place to manage the risks between the young people. The interim manager has made the decision to delay the admission until she is assured that the staff have the skills, knowledge and emotional capacity to keep the young people safe.

Physical intervention has only been used once since April, however, an unapproved floor hold was used. The record seen was not kept securely and lacked thorough evaluation of the holds used in the restraint.

Leaders and managers

There has been no registered manager in the home since May 2020. It is clear that there have been improvements made since the interim manager has been in place but there still remain some serious concerns. The interim manager is experienced and has been able to identify the weaknesses and make plans to address them.

She has identified that the team is in need of additional support to enable the staff to complete their roles effectively. Supervisions are taking place and team meetings have resumed with measures in place to ensure that all are following COVID-19 guidelines.

Some areas for improvement are yet to be addressed. Recording systems do not allow full oversight by the manager and are susceptible to being lost or altered.

Staff have not received the training needed to meet the needs of the young people placed. As a result, young people and staff have been at risk.

The interim manager has begun to collate feedback from young people, parents and professionals to provide reflection and learning. She identified that the previous review of the quality of care lacked any consultation with others.

Independent visits take place on a monthly basis. However, the visitor rarely includes the views of young people, parents or external professionals. The visitor also does not include a clear statement of whether young people are safeguarded effectively and if their well-being is promoted. This is a repeat recommendation.

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, the 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 positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding;	28 February 2021

help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship; strive to gain each child's respect and trust; understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(iv)(v)(vii)(viii)(ix)(xi)(xii)(xiii)) This relates to staff implementing appropriate rules, boundaries and expectations. Staff need to build relationships with the young people and ensure that they are not subject to bullying. Police involvement should only be used when absolutely necessary.	
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— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if	28 February 2021

necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) This relates to staff following risk management plans when young people go missing and taking steps to prevent this when possible.	
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 work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;	28 February 2021

demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—

research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and

feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.

(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(c)(g)(i)(ii)(h))

This relates to the staff team receiving training in substance misuse, self-harming behaviour, child exploitation, missing from home, anti-bullying and autism spectrum disorder.

This also relates to the registered person implementing systems to ensure that records, specifically, relating to complaints, restraints and sanctions, are kept secure and are reviewed within specific timescales.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that evaluation of missing-from-home incidents is undertaken to identify any gaps in training, skills or knowledge for staff or to record and retain evidence of what worked well. This evaluation should inform the review of the quality of care. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.31)
- The registered person should ensure that children and young people are able to access all shared areas of the home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Specifically, locks should be removed from the living room and kitchen doors. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny. Young people and staff need to be spoken to on every occasion. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)
- The registered person should ensure that any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. The assessment needs to review a range of sources and include the views of young people, parents and

professionals. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC034851

Registered provider: Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Number One Riverside, Smith Street, Rochdale OL16 1XU

Responsible individual: Julia Hassall

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sylvia Eboigbe, Social Care Inspector

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