

SC034922

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a local authority and provides care and accommodation for up to four children or young people. Children or young people placed at the home may have been traumatised or subjected to abuse. They will be provided with a stable and caring environment to develop their potential.

Visit dates: 3 to 4 November 2020

Previous inspection date: 28 August 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Outstanding

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

Children and young people have trusted and secure relationships with the adults who care for them. They have a sense of belonging and acceptance living at the home. One child said, 'They respect you. They've given me some responsibility and it makes me feel like I'm trusted.'

The children's and young people's outcomes have improved, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff have supported one young person to return home, while also attending further education. Those still living at the home have continued to make progress. For example, one young person is thriving with her college course. Other children are developing their personal resilience to help them towards attending school.

The home is decorated to a high standard. The staff have created a calm and homely environment for the children and young people to live in. The children's and young people's artwork is visible around the home. Bedrooms are decorated with pictures of families and friends. Children and young people have their own space, privacy, and are able to relax. One child has a passion for using building blocks and has been provided with a large space to keep all his creations.

Staff have ensured that family time has continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. When able, staff have supported children and young people to meet with their family face to face, in line with the local restrictions. This has helped them to maintain their relationships with those who are important to them.

Children and young people living at the home have their voice heard and feel safe enough to say when something is affecting them. The staff are always listening and communicating with them to understand their wishes and feelings, as any good parent would. One young person said, 'It's like being in a family, you don't feel like you live in care.'

The safety of children

The manager and staff are skilled at identifying when a child or young person is in emotional distress. An independent reviewing officer told the inspector, 'They know what to do when things become unsettled. They know their children inside out.' Children and young people feel settled in the knowledge that the staff understand them.

Children and young people rarely go missing from the home. When this has occurred, staff have been proactive and highly responsive. Staff have worked with other agencies, such as the police, to understand the push-and-pull factors which led to the incidents of missing from home. Staff's understanding of the children's and young people's triggers has been a mitigating factor in reducing missing-from-home episodes.

The children and young people have a consistent daily routine. The home is well resourced, and the children and young people take part in a wide variety of activities. The children and young people have well-structured days and staff are always available for them.

The staff help the children and young people to reflect on the effect that their behaviour has on others. Staff are supporting children and young people to develop empathy by using restorative practice on a daily basis. This allows children and young people to feel respected and safe knowing that if they make a mistake, they will be supported to work things out.

Leaders and managers

The newly appointed manager and his team are continually striving to improve the quality of care. They have high aspirations and the well-being of children and young people is at the centre of every decision that is made. The manager and staff provide a home where children and young people feel accepted and loved.

The staff are experienced, well supported and have the skills needed to care for the children and young people. Their skills have enabled them to minimise the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and maintain a sense of normality. They have provided the opportunity for children and young people to take part in activities and holidays, all while still adhering to the local lockdown restrictions.

The manager and staff have a strong working relationship with social workers, school staff and parents. The manager and his staff are recognised by these people for the difference they are making to the children's and young people's lives. One parent said, 'They know how to fix things; my son is getting more confident. They never give up on him.'

Planning for children and young people who are referred to the home is well thought out. The manager, staff and those already living at the home are able to meet the prospective new arrival before they move in. On one occasion, an impact risk assessment was not completed to evaluate if it was suitable for the children and young people to live together.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- 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 homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

- There is no expectation that the registered person will review the home against every part of the quality standards every six months – registered persons should use their professional judgement to decide which factors to focus on. The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strength and possible weakness in the home's care, which will be captured in the written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next six months of delivery within the home and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)

This relates to including evidence in the report that children and young people's feedback and opinions have contributed to the quality of care review. The written report should include an action plan that the registered person considers necessary to improve or maintain the quality of care provided to children.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC034922

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

Aaron Mcloughlin, Social Care Inspector

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