

SC035428

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a local authority. It provides emergency care and accommodation for up to two young people with emotional or behavioural needs. It is intended that young people will not reside at the home for longer than 28 days. However, periods of care may exceed 28 days in some circumstances.

Visit dates: 9 to 10 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 21 May 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be 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

Despite the short-term nature of young people's placements, young people describe trusted and secure relationships with staff. These positive relationships support young people's well-being and progress.

Staff quickly develop a good understanding of young people's complex needs. They work very well with external professionals to ensure that young people's needs are met.

Staff understand what is important to young people and are highly responsive to their needs. Following the unplanned admission of an unaccompanied asylum seeker, staff worked very quickly to ensure that his health, emotional, religious and cultural needs were met.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with people who are important to them. A young person said: 'They don't just help me to see my family. They always make it happen.'

Staff ensure that young people are supported to engage in education or training. Where young people face barriers to education, staff ensure that they receive additional or specialist support.

The safety of children

Young people feel safe. One young person said, 'I know the staff care about me and that makes me feel so safe.'

External professionals and parents express high levels of confidence in staff to keep young people safe. In addition, they feel that young people have reduced their high-risk behaviours since their admission to the home.

Risk management practice is effective. Staff quickly identify new and emerging risks and take prompt action to manage them. Staff are able to confidently describe actions required by them to safeguard young people.

There are high levels of collaborative working with external agencies, which helps to maintain young people's safety.

Staff understand young people's behaviours and why these negative behaviours might occur. Individualised support plans help staff to support young people to develop safer and more appropriate behaviours.

Leaders and managers

There is a suitably qualified and experienced manager in place. The manager is highly child centred and demonstrates a strong commitment to improving young people's experiences and outcomes.

Since the last inspection, the stated purpose of the home has changed. The manager and staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the home's new purpose and are able to describe the home's aims and objectives.

The manager has implemented additional reviewing processes for young people's plans, which include external professionals. This is due to the short-term nature of young people's stays and the likelihood of changing and emerging needs.

The home has experienced a high staff turnover since the last inspection. However, this has now settled, and young people receive their care from a consistent staff team. Agency staff are no longer employed at the home.

Staff continue to benefit from a good level of training and supervision but have not yet completed training in emergency admission or crisis-care planning. Staff do, however, show good understanding of the additional challenges that this model of care presents and are able to discuss how they overcome these challenges.

Monitoring processes have improved since the last inspection. They enable the manager to identify shortfalls quickly and to address them. There has been good progress in meeting requirements made following the last inspection of the home.

External monitoring has continued. Virtual visits were carried out when restrictions were in place to manage risks relating to the pandemic. The visitor contacted young people and external professionals by phone and scrutinised various documents. However, the visitor does not consistently provide an opinion in their reports as to whether young people are safeguarded effectively or receive care that promotes their well-being. A requirement is raised in relation to this matter.

Notifications of significant events have not always been received by Ofsted in a timely fashion. A requirement is raised to support improvement in this area.

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
Notification of a serious event	16/10/2020
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—	

a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a-e))	
Independent person: visits and reports The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children’s home at least once each month. The independent person must produce a report about a visit (“the independent person’s report”) which sets out, in particular, the independent person’s opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children’s well-being. (Regulation 44 (1)(4)(a)(b))	16/10/2020

Recommendations

- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should detail the necessary management and staffing structure (including any staff working on a casual basis), the experience and qualifications of staff currently working within the staffing structure and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the home’s Statement of Purpose. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 53, paragraph 10.8)

- The children's home must produce a children's guide. The children's guide must be made available to all children when their placement in the home is agreed (or on arrival at the home if the placement is made in an emergency) and must be age appropriate, provided in an accessible format and explained to each child to make sure they understand it. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.21)
- Each child should have permission for staff to administer first aid and non-prescription medication from a person with parental responsibility for them recorded in their relevant plan. For looked-after children, this permission should be sought and arranged by the child's social worker. Where appropriate, the child's family should be involved in supporting their child's health needs as well as in providing permission for treatment.
('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.14)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC035428

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Registered provider address: PO Box 78, County Hall, Fishergate, Preston PR1 8XJ

Responsible individual: Michael Nunn

Registered manager: Hena Begum

Inspector

Marie Cordingley, Social Care Inspector

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