

SC035439

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to accommodate six children with social and emotional difficulties. The home is owned by a local authority, which has other homes in the county.

The registered manager has been in post since October 2018.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 5 March 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Improved 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 identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Staff and children enjoy strong and trusting relationships that have flourished during the pandemic. Staff moved in to the home during this time. Children said that they know staff care for them when staff leave their own families to look after them and keep them safe.

Children continue to keep in touch with their families. Staff have been creative in the use of technology to enable families to communicate during times of lockdown and social distancing.

Staff and education providers work together, ensuring that all children continue to learn and make progress in their education. Staff have been creative and developed a good routine of daily education in the morning. The majority of children attend a mainstream school and spoke excitedly about how they looked forward to seeing friends again and paraded in their new uniform and shoes.

Staff understand the multiple and sometimes complex needs of the children. However, on one occasion staff did not monitor effectively the impact of an incident on children's emotional health and failed to seek professional medical advice when necessary.

Children said that they can talk freely and openly with staff about any health issues. Children said that staff have helped them to understand the COVID-19 pandemic and how to keep safe and healthy.

Children shared their views about their care, the home, community and national issues. Children took part in the fortnightly handover and embraced staff as they left to return to their own families. Children enjoyed an adventure holiday in Wales and took part in rock climbing sessions, which boosted their self-esteem and saw children's confidence soar.

The safety of children

Staff understand how to manage risk and keep children safe. Children have not been missing from the home and have followed government guidance about keeping safe during the pandemic.

The positive relationships between staff and children, and this understanding of risk, have allowed children and staff to have a better understanding of one another, which has significantly reduced the number of incidents in the home.

Staff understand the effect on children's behaviour of being confined indoors during lockdown. Staff have dealt effectively with the few incidents of challenging behaviour that have occurred. On one occasion, staff had to remove a ligature from around a child's neck. Staff sat throughout the night consoling and monitoring the child. However, no medical advice was sought, and they were not removed to a place of safety. This was not in line with the home's procedures.

Staff continue to access training in a variety of formats, including training on self-harm. This enables staff to understand the potential impact of a child's emotional health and to respond to keep children safe and protected.

Leaders and managers

The manager has a wealth of experience and has been manager of this home for three years. She is ably supported by two assistant managers and a strong team of residential staff.

The manager and senior staff ensure that all children's plans are constantly reviewed, considering the COVID-19 outbreak and the easing of restrictions. Staff clearly understand these plans and implement them appropriately.

The independent visitor continues to monitor the progress and well-being of the children. Visits were carried out virtually initially but did not involve speaking with children or staff. This failed to give children the opportunity to speak with someone independent from the home about their care during lockdown. Documents were viewed but not scrutinised, and feedback to the staff and managers following the incident with the ligature was missed. The visitor has returned to on-site visits.

The manager regularly consults children and stakeholders and uses this to improve the care and experiences provided for children. For example, the children asked for the fortnightly rota to be changed to seven days, so children had a new staff team every week. Children and staff found the new shift pattern better and are now looking at how they can take the positives of 'living in' the home into future practice.

Strong relationships with partner agencies and social workers have continued with regular opportunities for face-to-face discussions in the garden. Professionals continue to work together to benefit the children.

Staff benefit from strong leadership and support. Training continues in a variety of formats to ensure continued and effective staff development. The manager provides regular supervision to all staff.

The requirement made at the last inspection has been met.

Two requirements have been made following this visit.

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
Staff are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies (Regulation 12(2)(ii))	30/09/2020
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(3)(a)(b))	31/10/2020

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC035439

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

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

Responsible individual: John Simpson

Registered manager: Sian Buckley

Inspector

Elaine Clare, Social Care Inspector



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