

SC037910

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a local authority. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people. The key theoretical model used in the home is the 'Pillars of Parenting' model. Its aim is to help children and young people recover from experiences which have rendered them vulnerable and disrupted their primary relationships. The home can also accommodate young people in an emergency situation. The home was voluntarily closed from July 2018 to December 2019.

The manager has been registered since August 2008.

Visit dates: 9 to 10 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 15 May 2018

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 identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Since the home reopened in December 2019, the staff have provided care for solo placements, plus, on a few occasions, very short placements for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children awaiting more appropriate accommodation. While the staff have managed these situations well, they have, however, lacked training around the issues relating to the individual status of the child and of their cultures.

In regard to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, the local authority is aware of the expectation in displaying due diligence in gathering information but also in recognising the realities of how difficult this can be in an emergency situation. Information gained at this visit evidences the staff's strengths in managing emergency situations well. However, staff have lacked specific training related to asylum-seeking children. Senior leaders responded positively to the feedback about delivering further focused training for the staff.

The young people at this service display high-risk behaviours. The staff manage these high-risk incidents consistently well. A parent spoke positively about the quality of care and of the support they and their child are receiving. The parent was satisfied with how contact arrangements have been supported during the COVID-19 period.

Effective communication between the acting manager and the staff team ensures all information, including individual progress, is shared. The staff celebrate the small pockets of progress that young people make. This progress is significant, taking the young people's high-risk behaviours into account.

The sound deployment of staff across all shifts ensures that experienced staff work alongside less experienced staff. This is vital in managing the high-risk behaviours that the young people present with and is successful in ensuring that all staff have the support they need at challenging times.

The provision of education has been challenging during the COVID-19 period due to the young people being in isolation. The staff team has worked alongside the educational establishments so that laptops have been provided. This ensures that the young people can complete their educational targets. There was significant progress for one young person who managed to get back into school after a long time of non-attendance. For other young people, an integrated approach to returning to school is facilitated. The staff work closely with teachers from schools who visit the home to deliver education, where appropriate.

The safety of children

The acting manager and staff have an excellent understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. They identify, refer and record all concerns or allegations. The acting manager will challenge decision-making where needed. The staff have up-to-date knowledge of a broad and relevant range of safeguarding matters.

Risk assessments and management plans are individualised, dynamic and offer clear guidance for the staff to follow. Staff work very closely with agencies to safeguard the young people and to show them that they care and want to keep them safe. There are regular multi-professional meetings taking place where agreed actions are put in place to help reduce the young person's presenting risks. For some young people, these risks decrease from a high to a medium risk. During COVID-19 times, these meetings have been virtual.

A strength of the service is the staff's ability to form trusted and secure relationships with the young people. For most young people, their stay is for a short period of time. However, the staff are effective in forming trusted relationships quickly.

An important focus for the staff is the support they provide, not only to the young person, but also to their families. As a result, communication is improved, and behaviour management can be applied consistently both at the children's home and when young people have contact with their family. The staff also successfully guide the young people away from adults who do not have a positive impact on their lives.

The acting manager and her staff team have created a range of avenues for the young people to express their views and opinions. Young people can access the independent visitor, social workers, attend reviews, key working sessions, children's meetings and one-to-one meetings with the acting manager. They also have easy access to information, so they can access external agencies.

Employment checks on new staff are detailed and meet the requirements of safer recruitment legislation.

Leaders and managers

In the continued absence of the registered manager, the home has seen the acting manager take responsibility for the day-to-day management of the home. She has the full support of her staff, some of whom have been redeployed from other homes that are closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, to date, no application to register a manager has been received by Ofsted.

All significant events relating to the young people are notified to Ofsted. However, during this assurance visit, the inspector found a significant event, not relating to young people, that has not been notified as required. This is a significant shortfall and one that senior leaders confirmed they would investigate.

The acting manager and her staff team have delivered robust COVID-19 practices that ensure social distancing restrictions are effectively put in place. The staff take advice from Hampshire County Council and Public Health England to implement relevant changes and updates and ensure that appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE) is being provided.

The staffing of the home has seen changes in recent months, with staff from homes in the authority that have been closed being redeployed to this home. In addition, new staff commenced prior to COVID-19. All the staff have received regular and individualised support and supervision. Training has been a challenge. However, the staff have accessed many online courses. Staff speak positively about how well they have worked together over the recent months and of the strong management of the home.

The monitoring and auditing systems allow for the acting manager to have a good oversight of key events and associated records. The monthly independent visitor has undertaken visits virtually during COVID-19. However, she has now resumed being on site. Reports show how hard she has tried to engage with the young people, with limited success for some. The young person present during this visit did not wish to talk to the inspector.

There is a new quality assurance manager who works alongside the home and acting manager to develop and ensure consistency and compliance. The six-monthly review of the home needs further developing to ensure that it comments on the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff.

The home's statement does not provide up-to-date information about the home and its function or of the current management situation. The provider, the local authority, currently has a project to modernise and transform the children's services across the local authority. The impact of this for this service is yet unknown.

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 registered person must keep the statement of purpose under review, and, where appropriate, revise it. (Regulation 16 (3)(a))	24/10/2020
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every six months. (Regulation 45 (1)(5)) In particular, the system referred to must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff.	31/12/2020
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(c))	25/09/2020
The registered person must appoint a person to manage the children's home if— there is no registered manager in respect of the home. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)) This relates to the continued absence of the registered manager and the requirement to have a registered manager in day-to-day charge of the home. An application to register a manager in the interim period is required.	30/10/2020
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development. (Regulation 33(4)(a)) In particular, ensure that the staff are provided training to further support the work they undertake with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.	30/10/2020

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC037910

Registered provider: Hampshire County Council

Registered provider address: Hampshire Council, 3rd Floor, Elizabeth II Court
North, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UG

Responsible individual: John Stacey

Registered manager: Tamara Pearcey

Inspector

Liz Driver, Social Care Inspector

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