

SC044224

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

A private company owns this children's home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children with learning disabilities.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since August 2020.

Visit dates: 13 to 14 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 26 June 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

Young people live in a nurturing environment and receive individualised care that is tailored to meet their complex needs. Each young person has a core team of staff who care for them. This means that young people receive consistent support from staff who know them well. One parent said, 'His staff team are fantastic; they know him well and understand what he wants.'

Staff encourage young people to become more independent. This is done in a planned way and at the young person's pace. For example, one young person who previously preferred to use a wheelchair in the community, now no longer uses it. He has lost weight as a result of becoming more physically active. His social worker said, 'I couldn't believe it; to see him walking was unbelievable. Now he doesn't use a wheelchair at all.'

Staff understand young people's individual likes and dislikes and plan a range of daily activities to stimulate and engage them. When young people were unable to access some activities due to lockdown restrictions, the staff carefully planned alternative activities at the home to replace them. For example, when one young person could not go swimming, staff ensured he had access to lots of water play activities instead.

Young people's contact with family members is promoted and appropriately risk assessed so that it is facilitated safely. Families have made use of the garden and large spaces within the home to visit young people while maintaining social distancing.

All young people continue to attend school during the lockdown restrictions. This ensures that routines that are important to young people are maintained. There is close communication between the staff at the home and at the school. This helps to ensure that staff across both settings use consistent approaches to support young people.

Young people's care plans are comprehensive and detailed. However, there are some inconsistencies in one young person's support plans. This has occurred because one part of his plan has been updated and another has not. This is potentially confusing for staff and a recommendation has been made to address this.

Most young people's transitions into and out of the home are well planned. Staff create social stories, which support young people to understand what is happening and help ease their anxieties. One social worker said, 'The transition was completely seamless from the young person's perspective. He is very settled at his new placement and this is due to the work put in by the team at [name of the home].'

The safety of children

Young people benefit from a high level of supervision and support, which is in line with their complex needs. This helps to ensure that young people are safe and protected from harm.

The registered manager keeps the risk of COVID-19 transmission under review. She updates this risk assessment in line with national guidance. Strict hygiene regimes and social distancing measures are in place for staff and visitors. Furthermore, personal protective equipment is available for staff to use when social distancing is not possible due to the young people's complex needs.

Young people living at this home can present complex and challenging behaviours. Staff work hard to interpret young people's behaviours and to understand what they are trying to communicate. Staff are learning to anticipate potential triggers and de-escalate situations effectively. As a result, for one young person, there has been a significant reduction in the need to use physical interventions to manage his behaviour. One social worker said, 'The staff have introduced new routines and consistent responses, which has helped to stabilise [young person's name] behaviours. He is better at self-regulating and there are significant periods when he is calm and can play.'

The manager demonstrates a good understanding of the rights of disabled young people who do not always have the capacity to consent to the way in which their care is delivered. She works closely with external professionals to ensure that best interest discussions take place and that the rights of young people are safeguarded.

All staff are provided with safeguarding training. However, on one occasion, a temporary member of staff failed to promptly raise concerns regarding the conduct of a colleague and therefore, did not follow whistleblowing procedures. Evidence was provided to demonstrate that managers had taken action to address this matter once it was reported to them. A requirement has been raised to improve consistency in safeguarding practice within the staff team.

Leaders and managers

The manager was registered with Ofsted in August 2020. Prior to becoming the manager, she was the deputy manager at the home for two years. She demonstrates a strong knowledge and understanding of the young people's complex needs.

The manager is child centred and she is confident to challenge other professionals to ensure that young people have timely access to the services that they require. She is enthusiastic and passionate about providing disabled young people with the support they require to fulfil their potential.

External professionals speak highly of the manager and express confidence in the staff team's ability to meet young people's needs. They report good levels of communication and have positive experiences of joint working with the home. Professionals and parents told the inspector that the manager and staff 'go the extra mile' to ensure young people are well cared for.

The manager ensures that all young people's plans are constantly reviewed, considering the COVID-19 pandemic and the easing of restrictions. The staff understand these plans and implement them appropriately.

The independent visitor continues to monitor the progress of young people. Monitoring activities have been carried out remotely to conform with Government restrictions. The visitor has recently returned to on-site visits and the manager has risk assessed this arrangement and is keeping it under review.

Staff benefit from a comprehensive induction and training programme. This equips them with the skills and knowledge they require to work with disabled young people. Staff spoke positively about their roles and said they felt well supported by the manager. One member of staff said, 'I love working here and being part of such a great team.'

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 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— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(v))	04/12/2020

Recommendations

- Children's care plans should reflect that they are receiving care which meets their needs and promotes their welfare, taking into account of the child's gender, religion, ethnicity, cultural and linguistic background, sexual identity, mental health, any disability, their assessed needs, previous experiences and any relevant plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards',

page 14, paragraph 3.2) Specifically, information about children's support needs and daily routines should be consistent across all internal care planning documents.

- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5) Specifically, young people's risk assessments should detail all known risks factors and the control measures in place to reduce the risk.
- Administration of medicines. Care must be taken to ensure prescribed medicines are only administered to the individual for whom they are prescribed. Medicines must be administered in line with a medically approved protocol. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC044224

Registered provider: Progress Care and Education Limited

Registered provider address: 5th Floor, 80 Hammersmith Road, London W14 8UD

Responsible individual: Wendy Sparling

Registered manager: Hollie Whalley

Inspector

Sophie Thomson, Social Care Inspector

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