

SC045408

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home provides a short-breaks service for children who are having an emotional crisis at home. It is part of a wider service for children experiencing poor mental health which is operated by Surrey County Council and the local National Health Service.

The registered manager was registered on 26 June 2020.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 17 December 2018

Previous inspection judgement: inadequate

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

Good planning between the multi-agency teams before each child comes to stay supports the child's needs being identified and met well. This results in clear plans for when children return to the community and has helped to prevent children from being admitted to hospital, which is an aim of the service.

Children's stays at the home impact positively on their short- and long-term well-being. Where a child's mental health is deteriorating during their stay, appropriate action is taken to get the right level of psychiatric support.

Children like coming to the service. They feel very welcomed at each visit and can share their concerns and views. One child wrote the following comment about their stays: 'Thank you for sticking by my side all these years. I honestly don't think I would have made it if it wasn't for [name of home].'

COVID-19 restrictions have been implemented well and changes incorporated into practice effectively as government guidelines change. Staff were very positive about how managers had supported them both professionally and personally during this difficult time.

Children's educational needs are well considered by staff. Staff work with educational providers to understand how to support children in school, talk to children about how they can manage school programmes and celebrate children's educational successes. Where appropriate, children attend the organisation's education provision.

Staff consider children's progress during each visit and support children to know what has changed for the better. For example, one child said they were concerned about what happened when she told a friend that she was feeling low. The staff found the positive, that she had shared her feelings, which she had struggled to do.

Children's contact with parents and carers throughout their stay is facilitated well. The support for parents and carers to understand their child's needs is well implemented, especially in relation to their child's mental health and how this is affecting their child.

The safety of children

Children's safety is promoted by a staff team that understands the risks for each child well. Risk assessments contain appropriate detail of individual risks. Guidance on how staff should manage each risk is readily available.

However, guidance for the staff on managing risk does not always match the quality of practice. The guidance is not always personalised to a child's needs. Despite this, staff can explain how they manage risks effectively. Incident reports contain all

required detail. These records provide clear evidence of what staff did, how the child reacted and how this incident concluded.

Risk assessments regarding activities are undertaken daily. Nevertheless, there was no written staff guidance on how to manage high-risk activities. This was put in place during the inspection. Staff reflect on incidents that occur and change practice where necessary. No impact on children's welfare or safety was identified during the inspection because of this omission.

Staff have a reasonable knowledge of the safeguarding procedures in place but there are some shortfalls in practice. On one occasion, managers did not ensure that concerns about an agency worker were referred to the designated officer by the agency, or themselves. This issue was not identified by the manager's monitoring systems. Concerns are often referred to children's social workers, but conclusions to the action by the social worker are not obtained.

Staff know how to develop and maintain positive relationships with children. For example, one member of staff talked about the importance of continually checking how a child is responding, even when watching a film together. A social worker commented that: 'My young person has a very good and trusting relationship with members of staff at [the home]...she absolutely loves going there.'

Leaders and managers

The registered manager has a wealth of experience and knowledge of health and social care systems. She has used this knowledge to create a clear vision for this unique service. The recently revised statement of purpose provides a good foundation for understanding the home's operation and its context in the wider organisation.

Managers support their staff team effectively. This has resulted in a highly reflective and passionate team. They create a positive environment and an open culture. Staff suggest ideas for improvements, bring concerns to management and ask for support where necessary. Learning from staff's interactions with children is shared at handover, so that consistent support is promoted. Managers do not effectively check that handwritten records about children's care are legible. There is the potential for important information to be misunderstood or missed.

Staff have a good understanding of children's multiple and complex needs and meet these needs well. A visiting consultant psychiatrist stated in an email to the inspector that: 'The skill mix of the staff in my view is appropriate for the children who present with a mix of social care and mental health issues.'

Levels of training have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, managers have sought alternative ways to support staff to undertake appropriate training and qualifications. Staff report they receive regular supervision which considers a wide range of issues.

The monitoring and evaluation systems within the home are being reviewed to ensure that they are more detailed. The quality of the last six-monthly report also generally lacked evaluation and analysis. The manager had already identified this shortfall and has made demonstrable progress in improving these reports.

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)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that outcomes to any safeguarding concerns which staff forward to a local authority receive. Any response must include an outcome to their referral.	30/09/2020
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 take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(vi)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that any safeguarding concerns about agency staff are appropriately referred to the designated officer.	30/09/2020

Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information

about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that all handwritten notes made about children's care are legible.

- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day to day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that all risk assessments contain appropriate levels of guidance for staff about how to manage risks to children's safety. The registered manager should also ensure that risk assessments remain live documents which are updated when necessary.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC045408

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Registered provider address: Quadrant Court, 35 Guildford Road, Woking, Surrey GU22 7QQ

Responsible individual: Laura Hoyles

Registered manager: Christine Gee

Inspector

Ruth Coler, Social Care Inspector

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