

SC045408

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

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

The registered manager post has been vacant since 13 September 2021.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 2 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 October 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 17 December 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/12/2018	Full	Inadequate
21/11/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good
13/03/2017	Full	Good
06/06/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

There are several shortfalls which could potentially have an impact on children's safety and welfare. The local authority identified issues generally relating to the safeguarding practices, staffing and monitoring systems in place prior to the inspection. Plans to rectify the concerns have, and are being, acted on but are not fully completed or always evident in practice. Nevertheless, children make progress and have positive experiences when they come to stay here for a short break.

The assessment processes for deciding on whether a child should come for a short break focus on the child's mental health needs. The staff do not automatically obtain information about children's social needs or social history during the assessment process. This makes additional work for the staff after the assessment and risks important information being omitted prior to an admission decision being made.

Children are warmly welcomed when they arrive for a short break. The staff take time to get to know the children, help them to feel at ease and build positive relationships with them and their families. One child has learned some helpful techniques which are assisting her to manage difficult emotions better.

Children's views are integral to decisions made about their care. For instance, each child works with the staff to decide what aims should be in place for their visit and how to achieve these. This means children feel aware of and involved in decisions about their care.

The staff recognise the importance of building a positive relationship with parents and do this effectively. One parent said, 'These are the only people [the staff at the home] that I will leave my child with at the moment.' This statement was made because she trusts that the staff can manage her child's mental health needs at a time of crisis.

The staff communicate well with education providers to ensure that children have a consistent experience of care and support during their short breaks and in education. Each child is supported to go to their educational placement and enabled to study while they stay at the home. The staff have supported children well to develop interests in the home and in the community. A parent said that the range of activities had made her child's visit fun 'like a mini holiday' which her child had really enjoyed.

When it is time for children to leave, the staff work well with other professionals to provide the right support which will help children continue to make progress. A social worker said that the staff 'engaged in [child's name]'s discharge meeting

and provided good feedback about areas of [the child's] strengths and areas for development'. A parent said she particularly liked that the staff phone her the day after her child goes home, to check how they are both doing.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and managers have not consistently ensured that safeguarding concerns have been referred to external safeguarding agencies within appropriate timescales. These issues were identified by the local authority during a recent audit of the home's practices. Leaders and managers have improved their monitoring of all incident forms by checking these daily, and safeguarding referrals are now being made in appropriate timescales. No children are currently at risk.

Leaders' and managers' knowledge of safeguarding issues is sound. They use their knowledge well to promote and safeguard children's safety and welfare. They recognise that there remain shortfalls in some staff's safeguarding knowledge and have completed additional safeguarding training to improve this. This training has not effectively resulted in all of the staff having good working knowledge of important safeguarding concerns such as child sexual abuse. Some staff were unaware of the full range of external safeguarding agencies, such as a designated officer, who they could refer safeguarding concerns to.

Written risk assessments generally provide greater detail of the actions staff must take to minimise concerns. The accuracy of these documents is only assured because managers check and regularly amend the versions written by staff. Managers are working to improve the quality of risk assessments written by staff. The training has not ensured that all of the staff have the skills required to meet children's needs.

The majority of health and safety procedures are well documented. A fire risk assessment was completed earlier in the year and recommended actions are continuing to be implemented. Leaders and managers had not monitored and recorded how each recommendation has been, or is being, met. This was rectified during the inspection.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The home has no registered manager. Leaders and managers are recruiting for this position but have yet to find a suitable person. The person responsible for the day-to-day management of the home does not have a detailed knowledge of residential care but is being supported by people who do. The local authority acknowledges that this situation needs a quick resolution and will be conducting interviews for a manager the day after the inspection concluded.

There is a strong development plan in place to improve practice and it provides clear aims for the service. The home's statement of purpose has been updated but has yet to be submitted to Ofsted as is required.

In the last few months, several staff have left their employment at the home. This has considerably depleted the permanent full-time staff team. Leaders and managers have implemented various strategies which have reduced the impact of the staffing losses as well as securing sufficient staff to meet children's needs. The responsible individual is also in the home several times a week to support its management. These actions mean that most of the time staff who know the home well and work together effectively are caring for the children.

Leaders and managers monitor some aspects of the service well, as described in other areas of this report. They acknowledge that other areas have been poorly monitored, such as poor safeguarding practice not being identified until an audit occurred. Actions are being taken to improve monitoring, such as a new monthly visitor being appointed to review the quality of the home. The two requirements and two recommendations made at the last inspection are met.

Systems in place to support staff are well organised and routine. The staff say that their supervision is frequent and supports them well, providing them with protected time to reflect on children's needs and their individual development needs. Team meetings are regular and are being developed further to increase opportunities for face-to-face training, which has been limited during the pandemic.

The staff work well with the professional team around each child. A social worker said that the staff engaged well in a meeting about a child's support needs after she returned home, which assisted them in deciding how best to meet her needs in the future.

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 care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)) This relates to the registered person ensuring that there is a satisfactory system in place for gaining information about a child's social welfare and needs when assessing children for admission to the home.	12 November 2021
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— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This relates specifically to the staff being able to adequately	12 November 2021

identify and write risk assessments which meet children's diverse needs.	
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 the staff have a good working knowledge of external safeguarding agencies and their differing roles of responsibility.	12 November 2021
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if— there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and the registered provider— is an organisation or a partnership; or is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)(b)(i)(iii))	12 January 2022
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must— notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(b))	12 November 2021

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC045408

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

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

Responsible individual: Laura Craggs

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Ruth Coler, Social Care Inspector

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