

SC055153

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This service is owned by a private organisation that provides activity-based intervention for children and young people who may be experiencing a period of difficulty or crisis.

Up to three individual placements for children and young people are provided. Placements are usually short term and are activity based. The children and young people are able to use other types of accommodation, such as a barge or camping pod. A planned yet flexible programme designed to meet a child or young person's individual needs and circumstances is agreed with placing authorities.

Visit dates: 3 to 5 November 2020

Previous inspection date: 6 November 2018

Previous inspection judgement: 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 have positive relationships with staff, which are built quickly due to the short-term nature of some placements. Young people feel that they have good relationships with staff and are comfortable raising any concerns directly with them.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with family and friends. During the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people have been able to take advantage of telephone and video links when face-to-face contact has not been able to take place.

Young people's health needs are met and they have access to specialist help when necessary. The additional support helps young people to talk about their fears or concerns and they are provided with strategies to manage them better.

Young people have continued to receive education during the pandemic. Their attendance has improved and that improvement has been maintained since starting in the placement. Because of the mobile nature of the service, the tutoring has been carried out in various locations. Staff have supported young people in completing work books, which has maintained their motivation to engage with education. One tutor said that the young person is now 'able to expand on his answers and gives good levels of enthusiasm in his learning.' When the young people were asked what they thought their best achievement was while in the service, both young people said that it was the progress they had made in their education. One young person also felt that their confidence has improved.

Young people are supported by staff to take part in activities. One young person has been living on the barge and was in a camping pod at the time of the inspection. He told the inspector that he had been able to go fishing and do climbing and archery. The other young person has been learning how to cook and bake, and has been able to use the skills she has learned at college to offer beauty treatments to staff.

The safety of children

Young people's needs are quickly assessed and risks are understood by staff. Risk management plans are created based on the information gathered about young people. Plans are reviewed when risks change or incidents take place. Plans are used remotely and updated once staff return to base. This ensures that the staff who are looking after the young person, wherever that may be, have the most up-to-date information. Risk management plans include strategies that staff should use to manage risks. Risks are discussed during team meetings and supervisions, and any changes are disseminated to staff quickly.

There have been no incidents of missing from home. There has only been one significant incident since April 2020. This incident has been managed well and included consultation with the designated officer and social worker. Action taken is proportionate and in the best interests of the young person. Key-work sessions take place to discuss how young people feel and to make sure that they understand the concerns and how they can learn from them.

Young people said they felt safe. Staffing ratios ensure that young people have someone with them to provide them with a safe environment. When boundaries are pushed beyond the point where they are safe, staff intervene and put boundaries in place that are proportionate and reduce risk.

Staff receive training in relation to keeping young people safe. The response in relation to a recent incident validates that staff understand what to do when concerns around safety arise. They know who they need to consult with and make appropriate referrals. The manager recently took action when information received by a young person raised concerns around boundaries. They liaised with the social worker to resolve the issue at the most appropriate level, managing the risk without putting in place severe restrictions, which would not be in the best interests of the young person.

A safeguarding concern is currently under investigation. This has been delayed due to involvement of external agencies. The manager has ensured that risks to young people during this time have been reduced. The manager is progressing the concerns.

Leaders and managers

The home is managed by an experienced registered manager. She gives high regard to the importance of the team around the young person. The young people benefit from a staff team that shows genuine care and warmth towards them. The staff give the well-being and safety of the young people high priority and their practice reflects this.

The staff team is able to deliver the appropriate ratio of staff to young people. The team works across different locations to ensure that young people can be accommodated in camping pods or on the barge, which is key to their progress. The staff team receives relevant training to ensure that they manage these situations safely, such as skipper training for piloting the barge. Staff feel they received the training they need to care for young people effectively, but can request additional training if they feel they need it. However, training for some staff is now out of date. The affect of this is low, and managed by matching staff with those who have received training recently.

The staff team has remained consistent throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff are rostered for longer periods on duty. These longer periods of time spent with young people helps to reduce the risk of spreading infection and fosters stronger relationships. Measures are in place to reduce the risk of spreading infection, such

as regularly taking the temperatures of staff and young people, and careful handwashing routines.

The manager and deputy manager carry out regular supervisions for staff. Staff find their supervisions supportive and they are able to discuss any concerns they have. Supervisions viewed during the inspection follow different formats, which may be confusing. The records do not clearly demonstrate how the supervision process ensures that staff are developed so that they remain up to date and have the appropriate skills, experience and knowledge to meet the needs of young people. This has already been identified by the manager who has developed a standardised template that will encourage a consistent approach to the supervision process.

Reports provided by the independent visitor are regularly submitted. One recent report did not include the opinions of the visitor, and the inspector was able to discuss this with the visitor during the inspection. The manager is preparing the review of the quality of care, which is due by the end of November 2020.

Notwithstanding the listed status, the general quality of the cottage needs to be improved so that it provides a homely and pleasant environment for young people to live in. While the accommodation meets their basic needs, small touches, such as ensuring that light fittings are repaired or removed, bulbs have shades, and cracks in the Artex are repaired, need to be addressed. The flooring and furniture have paint splatters, which could be removed.

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, the 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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—	31/03/2021

meet the needs of each child.

(Regulation 6 (1)(2)(c)(i))

In particular, ensure that the quality of the cottage is improved.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC055153

Registered provider: Thunderbolt Mobile Limited

Responsible individual: Michael Fletcher

Registered manager: Nichola Fairhurst

Inspector

Mark Broomhead, Social Care Regulatory Inspection Manager

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