

SC055153

Registered provider: Thunderbolt Mobile Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This service is owned by a private organisation and can accommodate up to three children who may be experiencing a period of difficulty or crisis. Placements are usually short-term and are activity based, using a range of accommodation such as a barge or camping pod. Education forms part of this programme and children can access therapeutic support from an external contractor.

The registered manager has been in post since October 2014.

Due to COVID-19, 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 3 November 2020 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 November 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 14 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/01/2020	Full	Good
06/11/2018	Full	Good
13/11/2017	Full	Good
23/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff are committed to giving children the best possible chance of success. They do this through the delivery of an individually tailored package of support that runs over a 12-week period. During this time, children are given the opportunity to engage in a range of new and exciting opportunities such as barging, camping, rock climbing and kayaking. This positive break from chaos and risk-taking behaviour has helped several children to find stability, regain control over their lives and successfully move on to more-permanent placements or return home to their families.

A flexible and supportive approach is taken to providing education. Tutors from the organisation's school visit each child and offer one-to-one tuition in core subjects such as English, mathematics and science. The learning timetable is further enhanced by care staff supporting children to complete education work packs. This approach has been effective in helping children to re-engage in their learning. One child said, 'I have done well with my education. I want to stay here until I have finished my GCSEs.'

Care practice is underpinned by strong and trusting relationships. Staff engage children in purposeful discussions that help them to understand the risks and concerns relating to past behaviours. Individual key working is used to raise awareness and help each child to make educated and better-informed choices going forward. One child said, 'Staff talk to you and help you see the dangers. It has felt like being on a rollercoaster that has eventually come to a stop. I am a completely different person now, the person I want to be.'

Children are supported to maintain and improve relationships with the key people in their lives. Staff provide practical support such as transporting children and supervising contact. They understand the impact that some relationships can have on the children and are unconditional in how they support them to manage these. A social worker said, 'Staff are really committed to [name of child]. They work in a very supportive way and are always looking for ways to reinforce positive thoughts about mum.'

There is ample opportunity for children to contribute to the decisions affecting their lives. Staff talk to children about their plans and support them to attend and participate in key meetings. Good communication with parents and professionals further strengthens care planning. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the positive progress children make.

Various types of accommodation are used, including barges that are owned by the organisation and a cottage which is on a contracted lease. At the previous visit, a requirement was made to improve the quality of the cottage to make it more homely and pleasant. This has not been actioned and there remain several outstanding

repairs and areas in need of redecoration and refurbishment. The child's bedroom, which was only viewed from the landing area, was uninviting and appeared to have no carpet near the door.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Keeping children safe is given a high priority. Risk management plans are individualised and contain child-focused strategies that are understood and implemented by staff. These plans are frequently discussed, reviewed and amended where necessary. This ensures that staff are adopting the most up-to-date approach when helping children to stay safe.

High staffing ratios and intense supervision are a key part of keeping children safe. Staff are good at reinforcing self-worth and helping children to understand and deal with the consequences of being exploited by others. In addition to the educational work that staff do, children have regular access to qualified therapists who help them to develop emotional resilience.

The children who are currently accessing the service are making positive choices about keeping themselves safe. Risk-taking behaviours seen prior to placement have reduced significantly. However, this is not taken for granted by staff. When incidents such as a child going missing do occur, staff ensure that a multi-agency approach is taken to managing risk and securing the safe return of the child.

Children are suitably protected by a range of safeguarding policies and procedures. The manager understands her safeguarding role and responsibilities. There has been one allegation since Ofsted last visited. This was managed effectively and in the best interest of the child.

All staff are trained in safeguarding. However, two staff spoken to during the inspection did not fully understand how to manage an allegation without prejudicing any subsequent investigation. This has had no impact on the safety of children but emphasises the need for the manager to validate staff learning.

Staff take a patient and tolerant approach to supporting children to manage their behaviour. They make good use of positive relationships and de-escalation techniques and encourage children to develop positive coping skills. Although children can be challenging at times, physical restraint has only been used on one occasion since Ofsted last visited.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by an experienced and qualified registered manager. She is child-focused and provides strong leadership for an experienced and committed team of staff who share the same child-centred values.

The registered address for the service is a business address and cannot accommodate children. Supported by her managers, the registered manager has

started to search for a suitable property that can be registered and can accommodate children. This will further enhance the service by providing a permanent base that can be used by children and staff. It will also go some way towards eradicating the need to use the cottage, which is well below the standard of good.

Staff spoke with praise about the manager's leadership qualities. They said that the manager is always available and supports them both professionally and personally. Staff are enthusiastic about their roles and spoke about the team morale and comradery. They expressed a pride in their work and how they have played a part in effecting positive change in the lives of some very complex children.

A set agenda for staff supervision has been introduced. This has improved the focus of supervision sessions, which now cover key areas such as safeguarding, children's progress, and professional development. When formal supervision takes place, staff say that it is purposeful and beneficial. However, not all staff are receiving formal supervision within the timescales set out in the home's supervision policy.

Staff have good access to a range of mandatory and role-specific training opportunities. Gaps in mandatory training identified at the last visit have been addressed and all staff are now up to date with their training. The quality of training is improving as more opportunities for face-to-face training become available. The manager is aware that needs-specific training, such as managing self-harm, gangs and county lines, and substance misuse, needs to be prioritised over the coming months.

The manager maintains good oversight of staff practice, care planning and children's progress. She makes good use of a range of internal quality assurance processes to ensure that the aims and objectives of the service are being achieved.

Reports provided by the independent visitor do not consistently promote improvement. Actions raised at the end of each report do not always reflect the shortfalls within the body of the report. One shortfall relating to the standard of accommodation in the cottage is a recurring theme but has only been raised as an action on one occasion, despite no progress being made. Furthermore, there is an absence of consultation with parents as part of the independent person's visits.

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— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i))	23 December 2021
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))	23 December 2021
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a))	23 December 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should validate staff learning after completing training, in particular so that staff know what action to take in the event of a child making an allegation. ('Guide to the children's home regulations, including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.17)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff complete or refresh training in subjects relevant to the needs of the children in their care. ('Guide to the children's home regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that the independent visitor clearly identifies any shortfalls in their report and evaluate the progress made to address these shortfalls at the subsequent visit. ('Guide to the children's home regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

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: SC055153

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Thunderbolt Mobile Limited

Registered provider address: 158-160 Birkrig, Digmoor Parade, Skelmersdale
WN8 9HP

Responsible individual: Michael Fletcher

Registered manager: Nichola Fairhurst

Inspector

Paul Scott, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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