

SC056259

Registered provider: Pebbles Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by a private provider. The home provides care and accommodation for up to six children with emotional and/or social difficulties. The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2021. At the time of the inspection, there were three children living in the home.

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

This is the first full inspection of the home since an assurance visit and a monitoring visit took place in October 2020 and February 2021, respectively.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 January 2022

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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

Date of last inspection: 6 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/03/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
15/10/2019	Full	Good
05/11/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
14/08/2018	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive individualised care which takes account of their needs and vulnerabilities. Staff explore the reasons why children made limited progress before moving to the home, which helps staff to offer support in areas it is most needed. This contributes to children receiving care which helps them to thrive and flourish.

Children have trusted relationships with staff and say they are happy at the home. These relationships result in children feeling comfortable to tell staff when they are worried or anxious, and this provides opportunities for staff to offer appropriate support and guidance.

There is regular, effective communication between the staff, education and social care professionals, which promotes a common understanding about the plans for the children. Professionals speak highly of the care provided in the home. One professional said, 'Young people are flourishing, and I wish they had moved there a long time ago.'

Children make progress in all areas of their lives relative to their starting point. A strength of the home is the promotion of contact with family. This helps children develop a sense of identity and gain greater understanding about their early childhood.

Children are encouraged to share their views about the care they receive and what they would like to happen in the future. They participate in both major and minor decisions about their lives. When staff cannot meet children's wishes, the reasons are explained, and alternative options are offered. This helps children learn the skills of negotiation and compromise, and to feel that their opinions are valued.

The home is well furnished and maintained, and the children are supported to personalise their own bedrooms. This helps them to gain a sense of stability and belonging. Staff promote a range of activities both in and outside the home which provide opportunities for children to have new experiences and to establish new friendships.

When children move on, staff support them to settle in their new home. On one occasion, the child did not feel ready to move out, and staff supported them to challenge this decision. Although they were unable to influence the outcome, the support offered to the child did help them to cope with this significant event.

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

Managers and staff understand the risks to the children and have plans to mitigate these risks. They work with others to respond in the most appropriate way. This helps children become increasingly safe.

Partly due to the positive relationships they have with staff, children rarely go missing. When they do, staff follow plans to return them quickly and safely. Staff are trained to understand risks around exploitation and are vigilant to signs of this. If new risks emerge, then there is a multi-agency approach to managing these risks. This helps to ensure that any response is robust.

There are only rare occasions where children's behaviour significantly escalates. On these occasions, staff follow the children's plans but have not always held children for their own safety and that of others, even if the plan allows for this. This has sometimes been because there has been insufficient staff at the time. On one occasion, the police were required to manage the child's behaviour and reduce other associated risks. On this occasion, staff did not accompany the child with the police, nor seek to gain an early release from custody. This led to the child being held at the station and being anxious and scared.

The documentation around management of risk is comprehensive, but on some children's records the information related to a different child. This does not provide reassurance that staff's knowledge is always accurate. The system for checking that staff have read and are implementing updated information and plans is also not working as it should. Although staff demonstrate a broad working knowledge of the plans, they are unable to provide evidence that they are always entirely up to date. However, to date, this has not significantly impacted on the children.

The location risk assessment has been recently reviewed and does consider risks in the community. However, the part of the assessment which looks at current risks associated with criminal activity in the area is not up to date. This limits the manager's ability when deciding whether children can be kept safe if they move in to live in the local area.

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

The manager is newly registered and has high aspirations and a long-term plan to achieve positive changes. However, she has not yet had an opportunity to influence the quality of care or develop the culture within the home. This has resulted in weaknesses she has identified but not yet had sufficient time to address.

Some staff are relatively new to the home, and not all staff have the required qualification. Some staff have not or will not gain this qualification in the permitted timeframe. This results in occasions when no staff on duty are appropriately

qualified. The manager is attempting to address this by recruiting experienced and qualified staff, but this takes time.

Partly due to the pandemic, there has been increased staff absence. This, combined with long-term sickness and other staff leave, has resulted in staff shortage on occasion. The staffing on rare occasions is insufficient to meet the children's fluctuating needs, and this results in staff not always being available to support children's activities, provide dedicated emotional support, or to use restraint. It also limits opportunities for staff to have protected time to work on administration tasks and update children's records.

Managers have a good understanding of children and their progress and have established effective links with family and professionals. They have also advocated for the children, and escalated matters when they feel there are shortfalls in others practice. However, sometimes the manager has needed prompts to act when other professionals have not followed correct processes or provided the correct paperwork. The prompts to act provided by the home's independent visitor have prevented there being an impact on the children. It is apparent the manager has developed a good working relationship with the independent visitor to the home, who has also provided a lot of guidance and advice which have been of benefit to the children.

The manager has effective audit systems for most aspects of the homes operation and has ensured that staff have regular reflective supervision. This provides an opportunity for the manager to check out staff's well-being, understanding and developmental needs. Staff have limited training on bereavement/loss and anxiety, which impacts on their ability to fully meet the needs of children in these areas.

When children have made disclosures, complaints, or allegations, these have been responded to quickly and effectively. The manager has been tenacious in ensuring that children's welfare and well-being are promoted.

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 leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(d)(e))	28 February 2022
For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016.	31 March 2022

The registered person may defer the relevant date if the individual— does not work, or has not worked, in a care role in a home for a prolonged period; or works, or has worked, in a care role in a home on a part-time basis. (Regulation 32 (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)(b) (6)(a)(b))	
The registered person must maintain records (“case records”) for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c)) This refers to ensuring the content of a child’s records is current, accurate and understood by staff.	28 February 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should agree with their local police force, procedures and guidance on police involvement with the home to reduce unnecessary police involvement in managing behaviour and criminalisation of behaviours. Children should not be charged with offences resulting from behaviour within a children’s home that would not similarly lead to police involvement if it occurred in a family home. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations, including the quality standards’, page 47, paragraph 9.40) This refers to use of police only as a last resort, ensuring that children are accompanied to the police station, and advocating for them to spend the least amount of time in police custody.
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations, including the quality standards’, page 53, paragraph 10.11) This refers to staff receiving training in bereavement/loss and anxiety.
- Under regulation 46, the registered person should review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home’s location and strategies for managing these. Providers should refer to the non-statutory advice about the location assessment process: Children’s homes regulation amendments 2014: Advice for children’s homes providers on

new duties under regulations that came into effect in January and April 2014. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1) This refers to including and analysing the most up-to-date crime figures in the review of location.

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: SC056259

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Pebbles Care Limited

Registered provider address: 2 The Calls, Leeds LS2 7JU

Responsible individual: David Hitchen

Registered manager: Rebecca Wilson

Inspector

Rachel Ruth, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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