

SC061005

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to six children and/or young people who have a range of social, emotional and behavioural needs. The manager has been registered since July 2020.

Visit dates: 15 to 16 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 25 February 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Improved effectiveness

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

Most of the children and young people have lived at the home for over a year. They have good relationships with staff, who know them well. During the COVID-19 lockdown, children and young people enjoyed spending time with staff. There were movie nights with popcorn, spa sessions, Eid celebrations, dog walking, outdoor play, and exercise using the games console.

A newly admitted child has settled well and is making friends with the existing peer group. The manager's careful consideration of all the children's and young people's needs makes sure that there is a positive introduction to the home for all. Another young person had a well-planned departure from the home to move to semi-independent living. The ongoing support from staff provides reassurance to this young person.

During the lockdown, the staff kept the children and young people in a structured routine using a weekly education planner. The staff used informal learning opportunities, such as work on the children's and young people's independence living plans. This helped to maintain some level of engagement for those children and young people who sometimes struggled to participate in formal education.

The manager has developed good relationships with individual education providers and the virtual school. This partnership working makes sure that children and young people are allocated a place at a school or college that best meets their needs. This helps them to have a positive experience of returning to school or college.

The children and young people are involved in the running of their home especially through the regular residents' meetings. After a suggestion was made by a young person, the staff team implemented an incentive scheme so that children and young people could earn additional money. For one young person, this helped towards the cost of a bicycle, which he used to exercise and maintain a healthy lifestyle during the lockdown period.

The safety of children

The staff know and manage the risks presented by the children and young people well. When the children and young people engage in risk-taking behaviours, such as going missing or use cannabis, the staff educate the children and young people about the dangers. The staff work with external agencies, such as the police and drug and alcohol workers to reinforce these messages. If there are concerns or these behaviours are identified, the manager engages in strategy meetings, which offer a coordinated risk-management approach.

Children and young people sometimes go missing or are late returning home. The staff follow the individual missing protocols, and police said that staff are vigilant and work closely with them to locate the child or young person. This coordinated response has led to a reduction in missing episodes and in the risk of exploitation for one child.

The children and young people initially struggled with the restrictions caused by lockdown. This resulted in an increase in the children's and young people's frustrations, which led to some unsociable and inappropriate behaviour. The staff team has responded consistently in their approach and use caring interventions as identified in the children's and young people's individual positive support plans. They have, on a few occasions, had to hold children and young people to maintain the safety and well-being of those present.

The children and young people are well educated about the risks of COVID-19. Most have followed the guidance about social distancing and the need for increased hygiene measures. Staff are working hard to maintain a safe home environment.

Leaders and managers

There is now a registered manager at the home. This has brought a sense of stability to the staff team. The manager has made positive partnerships with professionals that work closely with the children and the staff, such as the police and virtual school.

The responsible individual offers good management oversight to monitor the quality of care provided. Additionally, the independent visitor is robust and identifies any shortfalls in practice, which are quickly addressed by the manager and staff team.

The approachable manager knows the children and young people well and is very child centred. The staff have been creative in designing feedback forms for the children and young people about their experiences during the lockdown period. This consultation is helping to inform the manager and staff team about the things that mean the most to children and young people.

Newly introduced monitoring systems ensure that tasks are completed in a timely way and that the staff know what is expected of them. The manager and staff frequently review the plans for the children and young people. This keeps them current and up to date.

The children's and young people's views are not included within their positive support plans. This recommendation was made at the last inspection and will remain in place.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Children should be actively encouraged to read their records and to add further information to them. They should be regularly reminded of their rights to see information kept about them and be given information about how they might be supported to access their records in later life ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.6). In particular, prepare child-friendly positive support plans, which children can add to and have regular access to.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC061005

Registered provider: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

Registered provider address: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, City Hall, Centenary Square, Bradford BD1 1HY

Responsible individual: David Byrom
Mark Trinder

Registered manager: Subtan Nazir

Inspector

Tina Ruffles, Social Care Inspector

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