

SC062013

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care and accommodation for up to three children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Visit dates: 28 to 29 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 10 March 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be 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

Children are well cared for by a passionate and compassionate staff team. Staff have ensured that restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have had no negative impact on children.

The staff have provided the children with several ways to keep in touch with their families and friends during lockdown. This has ensured that the children still benefit from a sense of togetherness even when they are apart from their families.

Children enjoy trusting relationships with staff and say that they are happy living in the home. Children describe the home as being 'calm' and 'happy'. Staff engage in conversation with children informally and in planned one-to-one discussions, on a range of subjects. As a result, children are able to express their views and are listened to.

Staff encourage and support children to attend school. During the COVID-19 lockdown when schools were closed, staff liaised with teachers to ensure that children had the appropriate resources to continue their education in the home. As a result, children feel supported, cared for and have opportunities to learn.

Children have a voice in the home, which has led to changes being made. The home is warm and welcoming and provides a positive environment for the children. Bedrooms are individual and personalised.

The safety of children

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of their role in safeguarding children. Children state that they feel safe living in the home.

Staff have a good understanding of risk and behaviour management. Children's risk assessments are individualised and regularly reviewed and updated by staff.

Children do not go missing from the home and they rarely display negative behaviours. When incidents do occur, the staff follow the children's behaviour management plans to quickly and successfully de-escalate these behaviours. This means that the children learn how to better manage their emotions and frustrations.

The children receive praise and rewards for their positive behaviour. This encourages a constructive and nurturing environment and helps to build strong relationships between them and staff.

Appropriate safety precautions have been maintained during the pandemic period. For example, visitors have been limited, staff, children and visitors have their temperature checked throughout the day, and children are encouraged to regularly wash their hands.

The physical environment is safe and secure and is checked regularly. These checks, along with thorough risk assessments that are reviewed and updated frequently, help to ensure that the home is a safe place to live and work.

Leaders and managers

There is currently no registered manager in the home. The provider has appointed a manager, who has submitted his application to Ofsted and is awaiting an interview.

Managers in the home have acted to meet the requirements and recommendations raised at the last inspection.

Professionals from partner agencies speak highly of the staff and the managers. They describe good levels of communication and strong childcare practice. They give examples of progress for children, including improved emotional well-being, ability to regulate emotions and improved personal care.

The manager and deputy have good relationships with the children. Professionals spoken to during the visit held them in high regard. They also commented on the good progress and support children receive during their time at the home.

Morale in the staff team is strong. Its members are a stable workforce who are supported through regular formal supervision.

Children's plans are clear, and the information is consistent across the range of documents. However, with the introduction of a new electronic recording format, there is risk that some information is missing or not updated due to the lack of appropriate training for the system change.

The manager does not make sure that staff's training records are up to date. This means that the registered manager does not have a good oversight of the training courses that staff complete. As a result, he cannot ensure that all staff always have the skills that they need to meet the children's needs.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should:
 - detail the necessary management and staffing structure, including any staff commissioned to provide health and education, the experience and qualifications of staff currently working within the staffing structure and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the home's statement of purpose;
 - detail the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training, such as safeguarding, health and safety and

mandatory qualifications;

- detail the process for managing and improving poor performance;
- detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice (see regulation 33 (4)(b)) and keep appropriate records for staff in the home. The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff, including the home's manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8).

- 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). In particular, ensure all staff have sufficient training with regard to the provider's new electronic recording systems.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC062013

Registered provider: After Care North West Limited

Registered provider address: 45 Kensington Road, Southport, Lancashire PR9 0RT

Responsible individual: Timothy Blundell

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Elaine Allison, Social Care Inspector

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