

SC063813

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned. It provides accommodation for up to six young people who have experienced childhood instability leading to trauma and associated complex behaviours.

The registered manager was registered with Ofsted in November 2010.

Visit dates: 19 to 20 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 5 August 2019

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

There are currently three children living in the home.

Children enjoy positive relationships with staff. One child informed the inspector the best thing about living in the home was 'the staff, they really care about me'. Staff advocate and represent children's views and wishes effectively. As a result, children feel supported and are settled in the home.

Staff promote the importance of education for children. Two of the children have full-time school placements. Staff have worked hard to secure a place in education for the third child and he is awaiting confirmation of a start date. Staff work well with education support networks. This helps to remove barriers to learning for children.

Staff support children to understand the COVID-19 pandemic and the implications for them. Staff supported young people to keep in touch with family and friends when face-to-face visits could not take place due to restrictions.

Children benefit from having access to a self-contained flat within the home which they can use to help prepare them for leaving the home. This allows children to build their confidence and independence skills with staff support. One child has successfully moved into independent living, having spent three years living at the home.

Staff work effectively with health professionals to support the needs of children. This means children are supported to take prescribed medication relating to their medical needs. However, there are concerns in the way medication for children is stored and recorded. During an incident, one child was able to access medication which had not been locked away securely. This shortfall had an impact on the safety of the child.

Since the last inspection, staff have made improvements to the décor of the home to make it a homely environment for children. There are still some areas of the property that would benefit from further maintenance and redecoration.

The safety of children

The home's risk assessments and behaviour management plans for children are clear and easy for staff to follow. They assess children's behaviour effectively and use summary sheets to capture the key risks. As a result, staff have up-to-date information and can keep children safe.

Children are encouraged to complete their own safety plans. One child has completed a safety plan which provides guidance to staff on how to manage his behaviour safely. Overall, this allows the child to feel secure and his relationships with staff are positive. However, on one occasion, staff have not followed the safety plan, and this led to a significant incident. This incident has had an impact on the child's progress.

The behaviour management and response to significant incidents for children is mixed. Some incidents have been managed effectively, evaluated by the manager and follow-up key work sessions completed with children. This reflection allows children to learn from their experiences. Other incidents have been poorly managed and have resulted in police being called to the home. A shortfall in the management oversight and follow-up work meant one child harmed another on two separate occasions. In addition, managers have not always notified Ofsted when significant incidents have taken place. This prevents the regulator having oversight of the home.

While incidents involving the use of physical restraint with children are low, there have been shortfalls in the recording of these. During one incident, the record did not indicate whether the child had sustained any injuries or what follow-up action had taken place. Furthermore, the record had not been signed to confirm accuracy.

Staff are well prepared to respond appropriately to children who may go missing from the home. As a result, missing from home incidents are very low. On an occasion where one child did go missing, staff took immediate action to return the child safely. Staff ensured the child was spoken to by an independent person and completed key-work sessions. These actions prevented further incidents and maintained the child's safety.

Leaders and managers

There is a registered manager in the home who is suitably qualified and experienced. At the time of the assurance visit, she was absent from the home. The deputy manager and education support manager are currently providing the leadership and management in the home with support from senior managers.

Staff receive regular supervision from the deputy manager. He has put systems in place for staff to learn and develop their practice with children. This ensures staff feel supported and are listened to.

Monitoring systems in the home have improved since the last inspection. External monitoring from the independent visitor has had a positive impact on the management team. The manager responds well to the advice received and has made improvements to the recording of risk assessments and placement plans.

Staff receive a wide range of training which is specific and relevant to the needs of the children in the home. This means that children are cared for by staff who understand their needs and have the skills to support them.

The deputy manager has completed a review of the quality of care provided by the home and submitted this to Ofsted. This gives some insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the home. However, he has failed to consider or include the views of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff in his report.

The home works well with other professionals and develops good relationships with them. One professional commented that the manager 'is an excellent advocate for children', and in relation to one child, 'She really pushed for the school to take him and give him an opportunity.' This approach ensures that children make progress in their lives.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(iv)(v))	17/11/2020
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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(h))	17/11/2020

The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular the registered person must ensure that— medicines kept in the home are stored in a secure place so as to prevent any child from having unsupervised access to them; a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1)(2)(a)(c))	17/11/2020
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(viii)(b)(ii))	17/11/2020
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(b))	17/11/2020
In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (2)(5))	01/12/2020

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 15, paragraph 3.9)
This is in relation to maintaining a good quality of decoration and maintenance across the home.
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC063813

Registered provider: DMR Services Ltd

Registered provider address: DMR Services, 102 Queslett Road, Streetley, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham B74 2EZ

Responsible individual: Sally Neville

Registered manager: Samantha Turley

Inspector

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector

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