

SC066010

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a private provider. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children and/or young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The qualified and experienced manager has been registered with Ofsted since July 2018.

Visit dates: 22 to 23 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 8 July 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

Young people have opportunities to develop trusted and secure relationships with the staff. This is because the young people are given unconditional and predictable care from staff who want the best for them.

Staff understand the young people's individual care experiences, their history and childhood traumas. This has helped staff to tailor their care to provide the young people with clear boundaries and support, which, in turn, helps the young people to behave in a more socially acceptable way and provides the basis for managing their negative behaviour.

Young people are supported to keep in touch with their family and friends. During the lockdown that was put in place as a result of COVID-19, technology such as FaceTime and Skype helped to maintain virtual family time. The manager and staff work hard at repairing and nurturing family relationships. This has seen family time becoming more natural, inclusive and unsupervised. Young people are now spending quality time with their families and friends in a safe and well-managed way.

Young people are listened to and their views, wishes and feelings are taken into consideration by the staff. Although there are no formal meetings, the young people are given a wealth of opportunities to express themselves. Young people feel involved and listened to. This helps them settle quickly and feel part of this home.

The manager and staff understand the barriers to young people's learning. They have worked hard to ensure that young people have appropriate educational placements and learning opportunities. The manager has used the complaints process to challenge the host local authority effectively. This is in order to meet one young person's additional needs, as outlined in their Educational, Health and Care Plan.

Young people are very much involved in decorating and personalising their bedrooms to their expressed taste. Some areas of the home are tired looking, in particular the flooring on the stairs and bathroom. This gives the young people a sense of pride in their environment.

The safety of children

Staff are becoming more attuned to the young people communicating their feelings through their behaviour. The manager advocates on behalf of young people to ensure that their emotional and learning needs are identified. Much emphasis has been placed on ensuring that specialist intervention and consultation are available. Delays in the allocation of this has been challenged by the manager.

Young people's safety and well-being are important to the staff. There are well-documented plans that identify the young people's known risks and vulnerabilities. Risk assessments are reviewed and updated. However, due to the

amount of detail, it becomes a cumbersome document to read. This doesn't embed confidence that staff know whether risks are current or historic.

The triggers to self-injurious behaviour and the management of such behaviours are well-understood and responded to by an able staff team. Most of the staff have completed training in mental health and self-harm. This has given them the skills to undertake meaningful key-working sessions with the young people.

The manager and staff have often been able to manage young people's behaviour without the need for physical intervention. When restraint has been used, this has been recorded and evaluated, and the experience has informed future learning. However, the manager has not always ensured that young people have opportunities to talk through any worries or concerns following physical interventions.

There is a realistic balance between managing appropriate supervision of young people with a young person's need for increasing independence and free time. Young people in the home do not go missing, and they are often home before their agreed deadlines. Young people's involvement in their care planning helps them to make more informed choices.

Leaders and managers

The manager and the staff have embraced the challenges faced by the COVID-19 pandemic. A COVID-19 risk assessment ensures that the young people are better protected during these difficult times.

Staffing ratios, combined with the manager's hands-on approach, allow the young people to feel safe and secure in their surroundings. The lone working policy underpins safe practice within the home. This means that staff are well supported and confident in their ability to carry out their responsibilities.

Multi-agency working practices, and regular communication with professionals and parents, embed a culture of shared ownership. This means that plans are progressed, and that the needs of the young people are at the forefront of their care. The manager has and will challenge any shortfall in service provision.

There has been much improvement, since the last inspection, in the matching and admission process. The manager has re-stabilised the home and has allowed time for young people to settle before he considers new admissions. Each introduction is individualised and flexible. As a result, there has been minimal disruption, and young people settle down quickly.

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of how the home performs. The manager uses internal and external monitoring to improve the experiences of children. Any complaints are investigated, and the young people are given feedback. The independent visitor hasn't consistently sought the views from parents and professionals. This doesn't give a well-rounded evaluation of the effectiveness of service delivery and the care provided.

The requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been met.

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

Recommendations

- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards' page 42 paragraph 9.5.)

In particular, risk assessment should be in readable documents, be child friendly and should distinguish between current and historic risks and behaviours.

- Any child who has been restrained should be given the opportunity express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicable, ideally within 24 hours of the restraint incident, taking the age of the child and the circumstances of the restraint into account. In some cases, children may need longer to work through their feelings, so a record that the child has talked about their feelings should be made no longer than 5 days after the incident of restraint. Children should be encouraged to add their views and comments to the record of restraint. Children should be offered the opportunity to access an advocacy support to help them with this. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards' page 50 paragraph 9.60.)
- Any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards' page 65 paragraph 15.5.)

In particular, the independent visitor should ensure that every effort is made to consult with professionals and parents, the children and young people to ascertain their views on the effectiveness of the home and the quality of care provided.

- 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. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards' page 15 paragraph 3.9.)

In particular, the fabric of the home should be well maintained and any worn furnishings should be replaced.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC066010

Registered provider: Quality Protects Children Ltd

Registered provider address: Hill House, Archway Road, Huyton, Liverpool L36 9XB

Responsible individual: Anthony Nolan

Registered manager: Robert Sharp

Inspectors

Cath Sikakana and Gemma McDonnell, Social Care Inspectors

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