

SC066458

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is privately operated and is registered to provide care for up to three children and young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or mental ill health. The home offers placements on a short-, medium- and long-term basis.

The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2020 and holds a level 4 and 5 diploma in leadership and management.

Visit dates: 7 to 8 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 3 July 2019

Previous inspection judgement: 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 and young people living at this home have benefited from stability of care in an environment that is both supportive and nurturing. Children and young people feel able to express themselves because staff are available to listen and engage with them around their day-to-day care.

Children and young people have been supported to successfully transition from the home. One young person has returned to the care of his family and another has moved on to independent living. This is despite the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Equally, two young people have moved into the home through well-planned introductions. Their backgrounds and childhood history have informed good matching and decision-making. This has helped the children and young people to settle quickly, and immediately feel a sense of belonging. One parent said, 'It has been a very positive and planned move, staff are very clued up and [name] has settled well.'

The manager and the staff clearly want the best for the children and young people. They work collectively to meet the children's and young people's needs and to give them positive experiences. Promoting and facilitating independence for the children and young people are proportionate with their age and are informed by well-documented care and pathway plans.

Key-work sessions address issues facing the children and young people to help them better understand their feelings and frustrations. However, not all reports are written in a child-centred way. The manager and deputy are aware of this and are looking at ways to improve recording practice.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, staff have been creative in utilising resources within the home to keep the children and young people entertained. This has ranged from converting the dining room table to play table tennis, to playing board games and completing various craft activities. One young person has continued to have guitar lessons in recognition of this previously hidden talent.

The safety of children

The children and young people living at this home say they feel safe and protected from harm. This is because they benefit from good staffing levels. The established

relationships with staff ensure that the children and young people are well looked after.

The children and young people can identify a trusted adult who they can talk to about any concerns they may have. This means that children and young people do not go missing from care, and for one young person, self-harming behaviour has significantly reduced. The ethos of this home is clearly investing in children and young people to achieve positive outcomes.

The home has a robust COVID-19 risk assessment in place that is reviewed weekly. This ensures that protective measures in place continue to minimise the risk of infection or transmission.

Despite periods of tension, the children and young people have generally accepted the COVID-19 restrictions and abided by them. Testament to this is that no child or young person has gone missing from care or attempted to abscond from the home during the pandemic.

Physical intervention has only been used when all other avenues of de-escalation have been tried. However, when it has been used, the manager undertakes debriefs and consultation with the staff team and the social worker. This helps them to unpick the reasons behind the behaviour and reduces the risk of reoccurrence.

Risk assessments and behaviour management plans are well documented, which underpins the approach and intervention required to safeguard and protect the children and young people. However, the manager has not kept these documents under review in line with the home's policy and procedure. This has the potential to impact on the effectiveness of staff's practice.

Leaders and managers

The manager has been in post since November 2019 and registered since June 2020. He has embraced the role with enthusiasm and faced the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic with diligence and good leadership. Testament to this is the commitment from a stable team of staff.

The manager and deputy manager have addressed any staffing issues as and when they have arisen. This immediate response maintains good staff morale and provides children and young people with continuity and consistency of care.

The ethos of the home is to work within the context of multi-agency practice and decision-making. Regular communication with professionals and referrals to specialist services are undertaken to enhance and improve outcomes for the children and young people. Education and training are promoted, and all the children and young people are supported in their respective learning environments.

The home has a team of permanent members of staff who are well supported. The manager is committed to giving staff additional responsibilities to enhance their

development. The environment of the home is warm and welcoming. Memorabilia of children and young people past and present gives them a sense of permanence and replicates a family atmosphere.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information about individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. In particular, there should be careful consideration and understanding of the impact on children when making a record in the children's case notes, including key-work sessions, and to ensure such records are child centred. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. In particular, the manager should review risk assessments and behaviour support plans in accordance with the home's policy and procedure. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC066458

Registered provider: Pebbles Care Limited

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

Responsible individual: David Hitchen

Registered manager: Robert Bamling

Inspector

Cath Sikakana, Social Care Inspector

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