

SC066458

Registered provider: Pebbles Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and managed. It provides care for up to three children who have been assessed as having emotional and/or social difficulties and/or mental health disorders. The home offers placements on a short-term, medium-term and long-term basis.

The home has been without a registered manager since 1 April 2021. A new manager is in post and is in the process of registering with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 July 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/01/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/11/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
03/07/2019	Full	Good
03/01/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The same three children continue to live together in this home. Children have excellent relationships with staff and each other. Their positive interactions create a homely and warm environment. The children are settled in the home and making good progress in all areas of their lives.

Staff involve children in home improvements. They have recently painted the garden fences and helped to choose new furniture. Children consider the house to be their home. They play music through the smart speaker in the kitchen when cooking and personalise their bedrooms, which creates a homely and welcoming environment. One child has two aquariums and is proud of how his fish are growing.

Staff encourage children to pursue their interests, which include fishing, swimming and DIY. They help children to learn how to problem-solve, for example, when assembling a fishing tent for the first time. Staff recognise that, through participating in activities, children are developing their social and independence skills and enhancing their relationships with each other, their family and friends.

Staff help children to have positive family time. Parents acknowledge the progress their children are making and describe staff as going 'above and beyond'. They appreciate that staff take time to support them as well as caring for their children. One parent said, 'We are on the same page.' This helps children to maintain good relationships with their families and promotes consistent messages about their care.

Children attend education regularly. Staff and teachers are particularly proud of one child, who has recently completed his mock GCSE exams. Children who are attending college are encouraged to consider work opportunities to enhance their studies. One child has written his curriculum vitae with staff's support. Children are being prepared by staff for adulthood.

Staff encourage children to learn the necessary skills for moving on from the home. Children are developing confidence in cooking and self-care. A supported housing officer described how one child had taken three busses to visit a grandparent instead of staff driving him. One child has had the opportunity to experience living independently in a taster flat. Staff supported this child to succeed.

Children have a healthy diet and staff encourage them to exercise. Where there have been concerns about a child's food intake, staff monitor, liaise with the teachers and seek advice from the looked after children's nurse. Staff refer children to specialist services when they are worried about them. This helps children to stay physically and mentally well.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children live in a house which is well maintained and safe. They talk to staff about issues that are important to them. This helps the manager to plan care so that children feel protected by staff.

Staff regularly support children to help them stay safe. The manager is proactive in using current news, such as the dangers of open water swimming during hot weather, to educate children. Staff took children to the leisure centre to promote safer, supervised swimming.

Staff have improved how they record the direct work that they undertake with children. They address relevant areas which are important for children as well as discuss more sensitive issues, such as sexual health.

The manager prioritises the importance of children having individualised boundaries in place to support their progress and development. She does this in consultation with the children, their social workers and their families. This has helped one child to use the internet safely and maintain a good sleep pattern to support his attendance at education.

Staff manage children's behaviour without the use of sanctions or physical interventions. Staff called for police support on one occasion to manage a child whose behaviour placed himself and others at risk. Since this incident, the manager is supporting staff to use therapeutic parenting principles to engage with children. This promotes more-consistent care, and children living in this home rarely display behaviour which indicates that they are distressed or have unmet needs.

Staff have concerns about smoking and cannabis use for some children living in this home. Staff discuss their concerns and use key-work sessions to identify support for the children. In addition, the manager suggests other strategies, such as transporting one child to school to mitigate risk. Staff do not always record actions that they have taken, such as removing cigarette stubs which one child collects from the street, as effectively as they could do. Without accurate recording of the action staff have taken, the manager is unable to monitor the effectiveness of the measures put in place to reduce risk.

The manager has written risk assessments for all children which contain appropriate guidance and direction for staff to help keep children safe. The risk assessments consider risks arising from the child's history and lived experiences in the home. The manager has not yet written risk assessments for recent new activities and friendships which the children are enjoying in the community. Although there has been no detrimental impact, the manager has not helped staff to consider all measures which need to be in place to ensure that children are safe.

Children do not go missing from the home. This reduces risks associated with contemporary issues, such as sexual or criminal exploitation. Staff know how to

respond if a child goes missing from care and most of the children have Philomena Protocols in place. However, these have not been updated to include contact details for new friends. This gives the potential for delay when passing relevant information to the police.

The manager ensures that all necessary checks are carried out prior to individuals starting to work in the home. She discusses applicants' individual circumstances but does not record or carry out risk assessments of these. Therefore, the manager does not give a written view about applicants' suitability to work with children and any additional measures which may need to be put in place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager provides staff with good leadership, and she has high aspirations for the home.

The manager has been in post since September 2021. She has identified her immediate areas for improvement and guides staff appropriately. Staff recognise that while their care of children has always been their highest priority, standards of recording have not been as good as they could be. The manager is implementing new templates and electronic records. In addition to this, the office requires furniture to securely store children's information.

The manager is child focused and consults with children about the development of the home. She advocates strongly for children when discussing their plans with social workers and teachers. The manager listens to children and encourages them to communicate with her in a way which feels comfortable for them. For one child, this includes writing letters to the manager. The manager has strong oversight of children's records and comments on the direct work they carry out with staff. This provides encouragement for the child and staff.

The manager makes decisions which are based on children's progress and needs. To support one child who struggles to take direction from female members of staff, she ensures that the rota reflects a gender balance. This helps the child and has reduced incidents in the home.

The manager receives monthly consultation from the in-house psychology service, which reviews the progress of all children and the functioning of the staff team. This provides the manager with clinical direction which she then uses to guide the care provided to the children. The manager has revised the home's statement of purpose to reflect a developing therapeutic parenting model. Staff are currently attending training and therefore practice is not fully embedded yet. However, staff recognise the positive influence that the manager is having on how they deliver care to children.

Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to meet the needs of the children living in the home. Staff talk about their commitment to the children, and the team

members work well together to provide consistent care. There is one vacant post which the manager is in the process of recruiting to. Staff cover rota shortfalls with the occasional use of agency workers who know the children.

In response to previous shortfalls identified at inspection, there has been an improvement in the frequency of supervision some staff receive. However, not all staff are provided with regular supervision in line with the home's policy. This means that, for some staff, their performance is not regularly reviewed. In addition, their development needs are not identified in a timely way when considering the evolving needs of the children living in the home.

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— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i))	2 September 2022
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. (Regulation 32 (1))	2 September 2022
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) This is a repeat requirement.	2 September 2022

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that records are kept up to date and stored securely while they remain in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC066458

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Pebbles Care Limited

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

Responsible individual: Amanda Quinn

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Joanna Warburton, Social Care Inspector

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