

SC066651

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority children's home. It is registered to provide short breaks for children and young people who have severe learning disabilities, some of whom may also have complex and challenging behaviours. The service can provide shared care to a small number of children and young people. In an emergency, the home can also provide short-term residential care to children and young people who need crisis support.

Visit dates: 29 to 30 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 6 March 2019

Previous inspection judgement: outstanding

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 have a good time during their short breaks. They enjoy the company of the caring and nurturing staff, who are excellent role models. Staff help the children to enjoy their stay at the home by engaging them in fun activities. The good relationships and clear boundaries set by the staff help the children to feel secure. Staff understand the children's complex needs and behaviours extremely well, which enables them to provide very good, individualised care.

The staff have a good understanding of the children's communication needs. This enables the staff to respond to the children's wishes and feelings. The staff are excellent advocates for the children. This has helped children to access the services that they need and has supported them to continue to make good progress. Children are learning about various issues such as equality and diversity as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. They have been learning about the importance of washing their hands regularly and how to socially distance.

Good sharing of information is enhanced by regular communication between the staff at the home and the children's schools. This means that both the staff at the home and the school are aware of any issues that may impact on the child's experience during the day. The staff at the home support the children to meet realistic and achievable goals during their stay. These are aligned with the children's individual education plans and are in place to develop their specific needs. Children's achievements are celebrated and rewarded, which helps to improve their confidence.

The staff work with health professionals and speak with them regularly, which supports the children's complex physical and emotional health needs. The contributions made by the staff who attend multi-disciplinary meetings about the children's health needs keep everyone informed. The safe administration of medication by the staff means children receive care that promotes their health and well-being.

Good communication with children's family members keeps everyone up to date about the child's needs and progress. The staff have cared for a sibling group, which helps to reduce children's anxiety about being separated. This also helps them to stay connected with family members.

The safety of children

Children's safety is promoted in a safe and secure homely environment. Professionals and parents have confidence in the staff team's ability to keep the children safe.

The staff understand the children's vulnerabilities. They supervise the children's activities inside and outside of the home appropriately. The written risk assessments inform the staff about strategies for reducing any potential harm to the children.

However, not all of the risk assessments are updated quickly when new risks are identified. No harm has been caused to children as a result of the shortfall. Children respond well to the consistent routines and boundaries that the staff put in place to keep them safe. Incidents of challenging behaviour are managed effectively, and physical intervention is rarely used. No children have gone missing from the home.

The staff team contributes to safeguarding meetings and demonstrates good working-together practices, which helps to safeguard children. Alongside the short breaks offered at this home, the staff team has also provided some children with full-time care and a place of safety. The stability and care given to these children has enabled them to make a positive transition to a more permanent home.

The physical environment in the home is well maintained and homely. The enhanced cleaning routine adopted since the COVID-19 pandemic reduces the risk of infection to children, staff and visitors.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager has significant experience in residential care. She is very child-centred and aspirational for the children. She is supported by a competent acting deputy manager and a skilled and adaptable staff team.

The manager's strong leadership and constant presence throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has helped to maintain the very good standard of care. This has been despite a reduced staff team. Short-break services have been provided to a reduced number of children during this period, which has provided an invaluable source of support to the families involved. As the restrictions have eased, the staff have returned to their roles, and the majority of the children are back to receiving short breaks.

Staff feel well supported. The regular team meetings provide staff with good support and clear management direction. Discussions focusing on children's progress and service developments have kept the staff up to date.

The independent visitor's reports are comprehensive. They confirm that children are effectively safeguarded, and their welfare is promoted. However, the reports have not been sent to Ofsted in a timely manner, which prevents the regulator from monitoring how the children's short breaks are progressing. The last regulation 45 report was submitted later than expected. Gaps in consulting with stakeholders do not allow the provider to address potential for improvements.

The integrated partnerships between the staff team, parents and professionals support the staff's ability to meet the children's complex and diverse needs. Parents and social workers reported good communication with the staff team. They expressed satisfaction with the service and would recommend it to other families.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to— HMCI. (Regulation 44 (7)(a)) Specifically, ensure that the independent visitor reports are sent to Ofsted promptly.	30/10/2020
After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report"). The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. 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 (3)(4)(a)(5))	30/10/2020

Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on 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. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

In particular, ensure that all of the children's risk's assessments are up to date when new risks are identified.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC066651

Registered provider: Sheffield City Council

Registered provider address: Sheffield City Council, Town Hall, Pinstone Street, Sheffield S1 2HH

Responsible individual: Carly Speechley

Registered manager: Julie Wiseman

Inspector

Jacqueline Malcolm, Social Care Inspector

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