

SC066912

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people aged between eight and 18 years. Young people may have complex social and/or emotional difficulties and require attachment-aware, trauma-informed care and support.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 2 November 2019.

Visit dates: 27 to 28 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 17 September 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 trusting and secure relationships with staff and the manager. Key working sessions show that young people have become more open about their views, wishes and feelings. This enables staff to act on these views and make necessary changes.

Staff understand the importance of family relationships for young people. Family time is promoted for both young people in the home. Staff have been creative about how this has been achieved during COVID-19. Staff have been proactive in reducing the risk of COVID-19 to young people in the home.

The staff team is now consistent and understands the needs and vulnerabilities of the young people they care for. Behavioural challenges are met with understanding, and staff quickly find positive ways of moving forwards.

Young people are supported to develop their independence skills. Young people are well prepared for adulthood. Staff encourage the development of independent skills such as cooking. Staff have developed young people's ability to manage their own health needs. The use of a newly implemented health passport has aided this.

Both young people are now receiving education. One young person has continued to attend school and college. Another young person was not receiving education until recently. This is, however, a challenge that the manager has been able to overcome. The manager has been proactive in challenging the provider and, as a result, has secured the provision of a tailored programme of education for the young person to meet his needs.

Staff promote and encourage engagement with wider services. Staff recognise that young people in the home require this specialist input and support. Staff and managers work effectively, sharing with and updating professionals where necessary. This achieves a robust team around the child.

The physical environment of the home is good in most areas, yet this is not consistent. One young person's bedroom developed damp, and staff did not move him from this room quickly enough. This young person was not supported by staff to move bedrooms, which left him without the physical necessities to live comfortably. The bedroom was not thoroughly checked by staff and therefore presented with hazards.

The safety of children

Staff have a good understanding of young people's vulnerabilities and potential to place themselves at risk. Staff ensure that there are a range of relevant risk assessments in place, which are updated when necessary. In some instances, there are numerous versions of assessments, which could be confusing for new staff. Despite this, risk assessments are of a good quality and provide staff with details of the context of the young person's behaviours. This keeps young people safe and reduces the risk of further offending behaviour.

There is a clear missing protocol for each young person. However, current young people have not been missing from the home.

Young people's behaviour support plans are generally completed thoroughly and updated regularly. There was incorrect information in one young person's plan, but speaking with staff made it clear that this was a recording error. Placement plans are reviewed monthly; however, they are not always updated with significant information in between reviews. Staff need to ensure that records are accurate.

Staff recognise positive behaviour and engagement by young people. At times, there are missed opportunities to re-enforce positive behaviour. Consequences are fair and proportionate. However, recording of rewards and consequences is inconsistent, as staff record these in two different places.

There is a clear system for complaints, which young people understand. When complaints are made, they are investigated and responded too. One young person complained about the manager not being present in the home as much due to supporting another home. As a result, the manager now spends more time in the home when this young person is present. Staff have supported a young person to access an advocate. This independent support has been positive to help this young person understand his rights.

Managers report safeguarding incidents to Ofsted on most occasions. There has been one occasion when the home has not notified Ofsted of a serious incident. The manager did, however, take appropriate steps to address this safeguarding issue. This included notifying the designated officer and social worker and taking appropriate action. Staff now understand that alcohol cannot be purchased for young people, even for the intention of cooking. Alternative recipes will be used.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager and her assistant manager have made positive improvements since the last inspection. Seven of eight requirements previously raised have been met. The registered manager has a good oversight and is clear about where there are shortfalls and improvement is required. This gives the regulator assurance that there is the ability to acknowledge where changes and development are needed.

Managers and leaders have addressed shortfalls regarding visits by an independent person. The organisation recognises that this measure of scrutiny is positive for improving standards for young people and has appointed a new independent visitor.

The home is now fully staffed, but there have been some changes to the staff team during the last six months. It is positive that there has been no evidence of any direct impact on young people. The staff team members work well together. Handovers following shifts provide an opportunity for clear and up-to-date information-sharing. Supervision of staff is undertaken within required timescales, and issues are addressed where necessary.

Recruitment of staff does not meet regulation. There are gaps due to references not being sought where necessary and no exploration of employment gaps or why individuals have left previous roles. Managers have not assured themselves that staff who are employed are safe to work in a children's home. Managers could have done more to ensure that relevant checks were completed prior to a staff member commencing employment. This could leave young people vulnerable to harm.

Staff have access to training and during COVID-19 have been able to complete most training where necessary with little delay.

There is management oversight of key documents. Young people's plans, risk assessments and support plans are saved electronically but paper versions are also filed. Electronic copies of documents are rarely signed by staff and managers; however, evidence was seen of paper documents being signed. This causes some confusion about where final versions are stored. Documents dated wrongly could lead to incorrect or historic records being utilised to inform young people's care.

Managers and staff place the well-being of individual children at the centre of their practice, irrespective of the challenges they may present.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;	23/12/2020

use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— protect and promote each child's welfare; treat each child with dignity and respect; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(ii)(iii)(iv)(vii)(c)(i))	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1)(2)(a)(3)(d))	23/12/2020

Recommendations

- Regulation 35 requires each home to prepare and implement a behaviour management policy. Staff should understand the system for rewarding and celebrating positive behaviour and recognising where children have managed

situations well. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 47, paragraph 9.39)

- 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: SC066912

Registered provider: Oracle Care Limited

Registered provider address: Suites 1 & 5, Riverside Business Centre, Foundry Lane, Milford, Belper, Derbyshire DE56 0RN

Responsible individual: Elisabeth Brownlees

Registered manager: Eleanor Brammer

Inspector

Ann-Marie Jones, Social Care Inspector

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