

SC066916

Registered provider:

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home. It provides care for up to four children who may have social and emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, there were two children living at the home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2011.

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **inadequate**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 15 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/03/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
25/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
16/01/2019	Full	Outstanding
18/12/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Children's day-to-day care is not planned effectively. One child is frequently missing from home and there are concerns that they may be at risk of exploitation. This child is not engaged in any structured activities or daily routines. Another child spends much of her spare time away from the home with her friends. When she is at the home, this child often spends long periods of time in her bedroom. The lack of consistent boundaries and routines are resulting in poor outcomes for these children.

Children rarely spend time with staff or take part in any planned activities. As a result, the staff team is struggling to positively influence children's behaviour. Both children are frequently away from the home with their own friends. Children rarely tell staff where they are going and who they are spending time with.

Children told the inspector that they like all the staff, but that they would not talk to them if they had any worries or concerns. Neither child knew if they had a key worker who was responsible for coordinating their care at the home.

Children are not making educational progress. One child has not attended school for a significant period. Sufficient action has not been taken to address this and there is no plan in place to support this child to re-engage with education. Another child's school attendance is erratic and she is frequently late for school. If not rectified quickly, this decline in school attendance will have a negative impact on children's educational attainment.

Some children's care planning documents contain out-of-date and conflicting information. This does not support staff to provide consistent care. In addition, staff do not always follow the children's care plans. For example, staff do not always report children missing from home to police at the time stated in the child's care plan.

Improvements have been made to the physical condition of the home and some internal decoration has recently been carried out. However, the children's bathroom does not have storage for children's toiletries or necessary items such as hand towels and a toilet-roll holder. This detracts from the homely environment the staff are trying to create. In addition, there is insufficient space to appropriately accommodate staff who sleep in the home overnight. A requirement has been made to address this.

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

Children spend substantial amounts of time away from the home and staff are often uncertain of their whereabouts. Staff are unable to work effectively with children to reduce the number of episodes of them going missing.

Staff do attempt to search for children when they do not return at the expected times. However, their searches are not well coordinated and the records they keep of the actions they are taking to locate the child are not detailed enough. This does not support an effective response in order to find a missing child or for other staff to learn from to keep the child safer in the future.

The manager escalates her concerns to the local authority about the risks children are potentially exposed to when they are missing from home. There are regular multi-agency meetings to try to minimise these risks to children. Despite this, children's risk management plans are not detailed adequately to safeguard children. The control measures in place to minimise risks to one child are out of date and ineffective. For example, staff are instructed to phone the child to check on his welfare when he is away from the home. The manager and staff told the inspector that they were uncertain whether the child had a phone.

Staff have not always taken effective action to safeguard children. For example, a child who is at risk of exploitation left the home in a taxi without telling staff where they were going. Staff did not take action to locate the child or report them missing for several hours. This lack of action fails to safeguard this child.

Staff do not consistently follow instructions contained in children's missing-from-care plans. As a result, there have been delays in staff reporting children missing to the police. The manager has failed to take effective action to challenge staff when they have not acted in accordance with children's safety plans.

The manager does not keep records of when a child has been offered an independent return home interview by their placing authority. This compromises the manager's ability to monitor whether children are always offered these interviews. In addition, when an interview does take place, the staff are not aware of the content of the discussion, so may not be aware of important information that may help them to better safeguard the children.

Some risks to children are not adequately assessed. For example, one child is known to smoke in her bedroom. The risks associated with this have not been assessed and strategies for staff to manage this risk have not been recorded.

Children are not supported to understand how to keep themselves safe. Direct work to help children understand how to keep themselves safe is recorded as a protective factor in their care plans. However, only one piece of direct work with children has been recorded in the last three months.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

There are shortfalls in the leadership and management of this home. These shortfalls are having an adverse impact on the way children are helped and protected and limits the progress that they are making.

The registered manager has failed to ensure that staff are provided with guidance about how to manage risks to children safely and consistently. For example, a child who is at high risk of exploitation left the home in a taxi without telling staff where he was going. The manager had not provided staff with guidance to support them to respond to this situation. As a result, staff did not take action to locate the child for several hours.

The manager has failed to ensure that children's day-to-day care is planned effectively. Children are not being supported to adopt good routines that support their engagement in structured activities or regular attendance at school.

The manager has not been effective in prioritising and making improvements to the quality of care provided at the home. For example, staff have not been provided with training on attachment and trauma. This means that staff are not equipped with the relevant training to meet the needs of the children.

The manager's internal and external monitoring systems are not sufficiently well thought through to identify shortfalls in safeguarding practices. For example, the manager has reviewed records that show that staff have not followed safeguarding protocols about when to report children missing from home. She has not identified this shortfall and she has not acted to address this poor practice. This lack of effective oversight is compromising the manager's ability to monitor and evaluate the quality of care provided to children at the home.

There are shortfalls in the records that the manager is required to keep in relation to a children's home. For example, the statement of purpose does not detail the staffing structure in place to support children overnight. In addition, the language in some reports about children is not appropriate and not written in a way that is helpful to the child. For example, the home is referred to as a 'unit' and children's home times as 'curfews'.

Six requirements have been made to address the shortfalls identified during the inspection. Three requirements are subject to compliance notices and the progress the provider is making will be closely monitored by Ofsted.

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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii))	8 August 2022
*The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.	8 August 2022

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)(h))	
*The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that each child’s relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(2)(c))	8 August 2022
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to achieve the child’s education and training targets, as recorded in the child’s relevant plans; support each child’s learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study;	8 August 2022

understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training and to maximise the child's achievement; help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible; help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(viii)(x))	
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b)) This relates to ensuring the statement of purpose describes the staffing structure of the home and the arrangements in place for caring for children at night. In addition, the statement of purpose should be updated with the details of the current staff team.	8 August 2022
The registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected;	8 August 2022

children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises.
(Regulation 21 (a)(b))

This relates to ensuring that there is appropriate private accommodation and suitable furnishings for staff who sleep in the home overnight. The provision of this accommodation should not impinge on the rights of children to access all appropriate areas of their home.

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that improvements are made to the children's bathroom to ensure it is well maintained. There should be adequate storage for children's toiletries and it should be equipped with necessary items such as hand towels and a toilet-roll holder. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that staff record information on children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes fact from opinion. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that is helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that the responsible local authority is challenged if an independent return home interview is not offered to a child who has returned from a period of being missing from care. In addition, the responsible person should ensure they take account of information provided by the local authority in relation to this interview. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

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: SC066916

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address:

Responsible individual:

Registered manager: Elaine Cooke

Inspector

Sophie Thomson, Social Care Inspector

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