

SC067810

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and provides care and accommodation for up to seven children. The home's statement of purpose states that the home cares for children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. In addition to having two other children's homes, the company is also a registered education provider.

The registered manager was registered by Ofsted in 2017.

Inspection date: 26 January 2021

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit took place to:

- investigate the quality of the independent person's monitoring reports
- explore the high number of episodes when children have gone missing from the home
- explore the effectiveness of the management of allegations made against staff.

The main outcomes of the visit are as follows:

- Independent person monitoring reports do not provide a comprehensive overview of the service and fail to provide the home with sufficient independent scrutiny or challenge.
- There is an absence of recommendations within independent person reports.
- Independent person monitoring reports do not routinely include external feedback from social workers, parents or the views of children themselves.
- There is a high frequency of children going missing. However, staff understand the risks to children. Staff consistently implement the statutory guidance for children who go missing and COVID-19 (coronavirus) guidance to keep children safe.

- Investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are handled fairly, quickly and in line with statutory guidance.

The monitoring visit was conducted off site/virtually. The inspector interviewed two children, the registered manager, the deputy manager, two members of staff and two parents.

There are currently four children living in the home.

Independent monitoring reports lack comment on the impact of care provided to children. Furthermore, the reports do not evidence that conversations were held with children or that their views were sought.

The registered manager confirmed that independent monitoring visits, which have been conducted remotely, do not explore the condition of the premises or review core safeguarding documents. This means that report findings rely heavily on conversations held with the registered manager and a proforma of information.

Independent monitoring reports did not make recommendations for improvement for several months of reporting, even when follow-up action was required from the home. This was not challenged effectively by leaders and managers.

The registered manager acknowledged that the independent monitoring reports do not accurately reflect the service and fail to provide the necessary challenge to allow the home to make continuous improvements.

Children spoken to said they feel safe and are happy in the home. They noted that they have good relationships with staff and find staff supportive and caring.

The inspector was shown around the home virtually during the visit. This confirmed that children live in a suitably maintained physical environment.

Although there are high levels of incidents of children going missing from the home, staff do all they can to keep children safe. Staff keep in contact with children when they go missing and debrief children when they return.

Staff members have worked hard to balance the safety of the children and staff. Children who tested positive for COVID-19 reported that they have been well looked after by staff.

Staff have been creative in using technology to enable families to communicate during times of lockdown and social distancing. This has helped some children to better manage their levels of anxiety. One parent said: 'Although we could not see each other in person for Christmas as previously planned, the staff were brilliant in arranging an extended video call so that we could still be involved in meal preparation and enjoy our Christmas meal together as a family.'

The registered manager manages allegations effectively. Children, staff and parents are supported effectively when allegations are made. The home follows all relevant safeguarding procedures as required.

The requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection have not been assessed during this monitoring visit.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/06/2019	Full	Good
05/03/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
10/07/2018	Full	Good
14/02/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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 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— 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; raise any need for further assessment or specialist provision in relation to a child with the child's education or training provider and the child's placing authority; 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. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(vi)(vii)(viii)) In particular, this refers to the registered provider needing to seek the involvement of the virtual school when children do not have an education placement.	27 April 2021
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working in the home as the independent person requires; and	27 April 2021

to inspect the premises of the home.

The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions.

(Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b) (5))

In particular, this relates to ensuring that independent monitoring reports accurately and comprehensively reflect the service and provide challenge and independent scrutiny to allow the home to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided.

Recommendations

- Ensure the registered person is responsible for deciding what each review should focus on, based on the specific circumstances of the home at that particular time and any areas of high risk to the children that the home is designed to care for, such as missing or exploitation. They will also consider what information or data recorded in the home will form part of the evidence base for their analysis and conclusions. There is no expectation that the registered person will review the home against every part of the Quality Standards every six months – registered persons should use their professional judgement to decide which factors to focus on. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards,' page 65, paragraph 15.4)
- The registered person must ensure that all managers working in a children's home must have the qualification in regulation 28(2) within the relevant timescales listed in regulation 28(3). All staff in a care role, including external agency or bank staff, must have the qualification in regulation 32(4) within the relevant timescale listed in regulation 32(5). The registered person may extend the time period if the member of staff hasn't worked in the role for a prolonged period, such as sick leave or maternity leave, or if it is not reasonable to expect the member of staff to complete in this timescale due to the nature of the hours they work. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards,' page 53, paragraph 10.12)
- The registered person must ensure all children's case records (regulation 36) are kept up to date and stored securely whilst they remain in the home. Case records must be kept up-to-date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards,' page 62, paragraph 14.3). Specifically, this relates to ensuring that all safeguarding records are available in the registered manager's absence and to ensure simplification of children's risk assessments to make them more accessible to staff.

- It is good practice for the registered person to ensure a note of the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions to be kept and to ensure that both the person giving the supervision and staff member have a copy of the record. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.4)
Specifically, this relates to ensuring that both the supervisor’s name and the supervisee’s name are recorded on a copy of the record and both have signed and dated the record.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children’s home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children’s home details

Unique reference number: SC067810

Provision sub-type: Children’s home

Responsible individual: Herman Allen

Registered manager: Michelle Nicholson

Inspector

Jayshree Pillay, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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