

SC068827

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to five children. The provider states in the home's statement of purpose that children placed may have experienced serious trauma, breakdown in family relationships, disruption in their lives and multiple placement breakdowns.

The registered manager has been in post since 21 January 2020.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 21 January 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 August 2021

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 22 August 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/08/2019	Full	Good
25/10/2018	Full	Good
26/03/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
04/10/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The four children living at the home have all recently moved in during the summer holidays. The inspector considered the progress and experience of the children in this relatively short space of time. Children are benefiting from warm and positive relationships with the staff.

The staff and the children have made a good start to learning about each other. Children are listened to by the invested staff team. Children are cared for and really nurtured. For example, staff tucked a blanket up around a child and checked on his welfare after he returned home late after being missing from the home. The children, at different paces, are responding well to the staff and accepting of this nurturing approach.

Children have fun as they enjoy activities and try new experiences. Their individual interests are catered for and promoted. As a result, children's confidence grows and this helps children to keep active and engaged in positive activities.

Managers and the staff show positive regard for the children in sometimes difficult circumstances. Staff empathise and validate the children's feelings when they become frustrated by rules, while also explaining why such rules need to be in place. This helps children to see that conflicts can be overcome without resorting to aggression. Nevertheless, there are some inconsistencies in how the staff respond to issues as they arise, such as some of the children's substance misuse. This sends the children a mixed message and has a negative impact on the other children living at the home.

Staff promote an inclusive culture at the home. A diverse team provides positive role models for the children. Staff create opportunities and learning for the children to celebrate and understand difference. This helps the children to develop a positive self-view and explore their identity.

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

Staff understand that they need to develop trusting relationships with children. They carry out direct work with the children to build trusting relationships. Staff are committed to supporting children in recognising how relationships, behaviours and situations can be positive experiences.

Staff form part of a multi-agency network approach in helping the children who are at risk from exploitation and the risks associated with offending. This network includes youth and social workers, police, and the youth offending team. In addition,

the staff work alongside specialist organisations that provide support for children who misuse drugs. Proactive working relationships with the police protect children from unnecessary involvement with the criminal justice system.

While some risk planning is good, managers have failed to ensure that the quality of information contained in children's risk assessments and risk management plans is consistent. For one child, important information from the local authority referral was missing, and his risk assessment was not up to date. As a result, the registered manager cannot be confident that staff are consistent in how they address specific risks and vulnerabilities.

Staff understand safeguarding procedures and know their responsibilities. However, one child's risk assessment did not set out clear guidance on the preventative actions the staff should take. Nevertheless, the staff demonstrate a good understanding of the child, and they take proactive steps to capture new information, which helps to reduce harm for the child.

Staff use restorative approaches and reflective discussions in the home. They challenge discriminatory behaviours and provide the children with help and support about how to treat others with respect. This helps to develop the children's sense of personal responsibility and helps to prepare them for adult life.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager, responsible individual and senior managers in the local authority are committed to children in care living near to their families, friends and support networks. However, a lack of local fostering families has led to children living together who have incompatible needs and vulnerabilities. While concerns have been escalated to senior managers, one child currently remains living at the home which is not suitable for meeting their needs.

The registered manager has failed to make sure that safer recruitment processes are followed for staff joining the home. This means that not all staff have been fully vetted to ensure they have the appropriate experience, training or skills to meet the needs of the children.

Staff have access to a wide-ranging training programme. However, the registered manager has failed to ensure that there is sufficient oversight of the training. For example, not all staff have completed mandatory safeguarding refresher training. As a result, not all staff have up-to-date safeguarding knowledge.

The home is staffed and resourced well. Staff feel properly supported and there is good morale in the home. However, an internal investigation was not promptly addressed or concluded. In part, this was because of COVID-19. Nevertheless, this led to an unreasonable delay.

The home benefits from being one of the local council's children's homes and from having the support of the wider council. The registered manager advocates well for the children, to ensure that others play their role, and champions for the children to receive the support they need.

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; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i) (b)) This relates to the registered person ensuring that children's risk assessments and plans are kept updated and that relevant information from the children's referral information is known to staff and reflected in the in-house risk assessments and care plans. This also relates to the registered manager ensuring that staff are consistent in their approach to ensure that each child is kept safe.	7 October 2021
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The requirements are that— the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(b)(d))	7 October 2021

This relates to the registered person ensuring that all staff undertake up-to-date safeguarding training.

This also relates to the registered person ensuring that staff recruitment processes adhere to safer recruitment principles and that a full employment history is ascertained, together with a satisfactory explanation of any gaps in employment, in writing.

Recommendations

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans. In particular, ensure that suitable plans for children are prioritised and actioned, when their needs are not met within the home. ('Guide to the quality standards including the children's homes regulations', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- The registered person should ensure that as part of the performance management process, poor performance is addressed by a timely plan to bring about improvement. In particular, ensure that internal investigations about staff conduct are promptly addressed. ('Guide to the quality standards including the children's homes regulations', page 61, paragraph 13.5)

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: SC068827

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Registered provider address: Quadrant Court, 35 Guildford Road, Woking, Surrey GU22 7QQ

Responsible individual: Lisa Wade

Registered manager: Allison Shaw

Inspector

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector

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