

SC357133

Registered provider: Social Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home. The home provides care and accommodation for up to three children who are not able to live at home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since August 2020.

Inspection dates: 3 to 4 August 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 4 September 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/09/2019	Full	Good
25/02/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/05/2018	Full	Good
30/01/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

One child has recently moved into the home. She was not present at the time of the inspection. Six children have lived in this home since the last full inspection in September 2019. Four children have moved to another home and one child returned to her family. However, the manager did not formulate a transition plan to show how children came to the home or how they left the home. This reduces the manager's ability to reflect and evaluate on what went well and what he would need to consider next time.

The manager has identified in the safer area location assessment, risks that are associated with the home's proximity to a main road, motorway and bridges. However, this information was not used to fully inform the placement decision of the previous children or the current child and whether this proximity would be an issue. Currently, this has not had an adverse impact on the children's safety, but if not addressed it has the potential to do so.

Children's progress at the home has been mixed. Some children have progressed in their health, education, relationships and in keeping themselves safe, but some children have been moved because of safety issues. On reflecting why these placements did not work, the manager was able to identify that not all local authorities/social workers disclosed known information about children on the referral form. He has taken good action by formulating additional questions to ask at the point of referral. This means that the manager can make an informed decision about whether the staff can fully meet the child's needs. In addition to this, he has challenged the relevant professionals about the lack of information provided.

Previous children were supported to regularly attend and engage in education. The children completed home schooling throughout the COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions. The children knew how important education was and responded well to the education incentives in place. Consequently, the children's outcomes improved. The child currently living at the home has all the necessary educational documents. She previously attended an on-site educational provision at her last home, for three years. However, the manager has not used any of this information to inform her current education plan. Further to this, the staff were unclear about the child's academic level, her attendance and what support she required. This does not show that staff can encourage, support and offer guidance to the child with her education.

Staff help the child to adopt healthy lifestyle by encouraging her to eat a healthy diet and to engage in physical exercise. The child is supported with her individual health needs and she has good access to local health services when she needs them. In addition to this, the child engages with a therapist to discuss her emotional health. As a result, she continues to explore ways of coping and is developing strategies to help her.

Staff work closely with children and the local authority to help children have meaningful and safe time with their families. As a result, some children have progressed from supervised to unsupervised time with their family. On one occasion, this led to a child returning to her family.

When children come to live at this home their personal, social and life skills are assessed. Staff help the children to gain skills that they will need for their independence, such as budgeting, housekeeping and applying for college or employment. In addition to this, children have played an important part in raising funds for a range of charities, such as cancer charities, the walk for Sir Tom Moore and the National Health Service.

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

Safeguarding practice at the home is good. All staff have received safeguarding training and additional supportive training, such as county lines, self-injurious behaviour and child sexual exploitation (CSE), which is refreshed regularly. Staff demonstrated to the inspector that they have the knowledge to support children and that they can identify early warning signs of involvement.

Some children have been reported missing from the home. Clear records show the action that staff take to find them and to alert other professionals. Children have a return home interview with an independent person. This means that the children can share the reasons why they went missing and any concerns they have.

Staff work closely with the children to alert them to the dangers of being missing from the home and from unsuitable adults. Staff use individual discussions, presentations and other agencies, such as independent CSE workers, to educate the children on the dangers. As a result, some children's concerns significantly reduced and other children are still processing this information. A social worker said, '(name of child) has complex needs and has difficulty processing information but staff have made good relationships with her and they continue to support her.'

Some children are vulnerable to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. Staff work with a range of agencies to secure the support children need. A police officer said, 'The staff here should be applauded for their diligence, their knowledge and the lengths they go to, to ensure the children's safety'. Another police officer said, 'Staff are exemplary and go that extra mile. Through my discussions with them they show an in-depth knowledge of the risks involved and try to equip children with the skills that they need'.

Generally, the manager reports all serious concerns to Ofsted. However, the manager has not routinely notified Ofsted when children have been missing from the home for several days. This reduces the regulator's oversight of the home.

Generally, children's risk assessments are good. They outline the children's known and emerging risks. However, the action that staff should take, if an incident was to occur, is not clear. For example, for a child who has a history of using ligatures, it

states 'ligature scissors are in the medication cabinet', rather than informing staff of the quick action to take. This does not ensure that staff have clear direction to minimise the risk or that staff give a consistent response.

Physical intervention is rarely used at the home and only ever used to keep a child or others safe from harm. Similarly, sanctions are proportionate and children are given the chance to make things right. For example, helping to repair damaged furniture.

Positive behaviour of children is recognised and rewarded. Children have incentive charts where they can earn extra money. They also receive instant rewards in recognition of their achievements. For example, children have visited a theme park or have gone out for meals for educational achievements.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has a good range of experience to care for the children and staff. Most of the staff team have a relevant childcare qualification. Two members of staff are currently completing their award.

The manager has high aspirations for the children living at the home and ensures that they are provided with a high quality of care. The professionals spoken to as part of this inspection were complimentary about his skills, knowledge and ability to work closely with them.

The manager provides the staff with regular and effective supervision that enables them to reflect on their practice. This is in addition to monthly team meetings, where staff can share their knowledge and discuss the children in-depth. As a result, staff said that they felt supported, valued and motivated. A member of staff said, 'The support I receive is above and beyond what I have received in previous employment'.

The staff also benefit from a wealth of training and development opportunities to support their continuing professional development. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, most of the training has been completed online. However, there are face-to-face training events scheduled for the coming year.

Children's records are up to date and give enough detail to show the child's journey throughout their stay at the home. Staff have a good understanding of the children's needs, experiences and progress. The manager challenges local authorities and other services effectively to provide children with the support that will meet their needs.

The home's statement of purpose and development plan are up to date. However, the home's workforce plan does not contain all the information required by the Children's Homes Regulations 2015 and the Quality Standards. For example, there is no information around the process and timescales for supervision of practice, for staff to achieve induction, probation and core training.

Monitoring and review systems at the home help the manager to identify the home's strengths and weaknesses. The manager is then able to alter his practice when necessary to make improvements that are in the best interests of the children.

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— 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; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers. (Regulation 8(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii))	30 September 2021
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 the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(c))	30 September 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

Specifically, ensure that staff have clear guidance on the action to take, if an incident was to occur.

- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person must have a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)
- The registered person must help each child to prepare for any moves from the home, whether they are returning home, moving to another placement or adult care, or to live independently. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27)
In particular, ensure that the home has a transition plan that supports young people to move in or out of the home.

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: SC357133

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Social Care Services Limited

Registered provider address: Social Care Services Group, 31 Shaw Road,
Stockport SK4 4AG

Responsible individual: Stephen Davitt

Registered manager: George Ruff

Inspector

Pam Nuckley, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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