

SC386810

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is one of a number operated by a private provider. It provides care and accommodation for one child who may have emotional and social difficulties.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in October 2008. She is also registered to manage another home in the organisation.

Visit dates: 24 to 25 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 12 March 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Improved effectiveness

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

The young person living in this home benefits from living in a small, family environment. She has been able to personalise the home with her own belongings, so that it really does feel like her own home.

The young person has very positive relationships with the staff who are caring for her. The staff team is consistent, which has enabled the establishment of meaningful relationships. An inspector spoke with the young person during this visit. She was very positive about her experiences in the home, saying, 'I love the staff. They really support me and made me feel so welcome when I moved in.' The young person frequently tells staff how much they mean to her and will write them notes to express her gratitude.

Staff spend good-quality time with the young person. They engage in a range of activities together, such as creating a dance routine or singing a song. They have fun together. The young person has learned to swim since moving here and is currently learning to ride a bicycle. These are important life skills. Staff support the young person's natural singing ability and she attends singing lessons regularly. This has made a huge difference to her self-esteem, with the young person feeling confident enough to sing a song in public as part of the local VE Day celebrations. This is a huge achievement and one that she is rightly proud of.

Staff support the young person to keep in contact with her family. Family contact continued in various formats during lockdown, including through the use of online video calls and socially distanced face-to-face contact, as soon as was feasible. The young person enjoyed a caravan holiday with staff over the summer, and her family members were included in this, staying close by for some of the time. Staff appreciate the importance of maintaining these significant relationships. The young person's parent provided positive feedback as part of this visit, saying, 'Staff are absolutely brilliant. [Name of the young person] has come on in leaps and bounds.'

The young person continues to make good educational progress. She has successfully passed some national qualifications and is continuing her studies at college. The young person completed a five-week college course over the summer, to ensure that she remained engaged with education, given the length of the break as a result of the pandemic. The young person has a future career in mind. This is helping her focus on achieving her goal.

The safety of children

There is some positive safeguarding practice in the home. A range of risk assessments ensures that staff are alert to any behaviours of concern. The manager regularly updates these documents, revises the strategies to best manage the behaviour and reviews the overall risk. This helps staff keep up to date and ensures that practice is consistent. This is important as staff are frequently working on their own.

There has been a significant reduction in the young person's risk-taking behaviour since she moved into the home. Some of her former high-risk behaviours have now reduced to low risk. Staff have helped the young person to become more aware of the implications of her behaviours and the potential consequences. She is now able to make better informed decisions, and as a result is learning how to keep safe. The young person has been able to alert staff to the receipt of inappropriate electronic communications, demonstrating the effectiveness of the work completed with her.

The young person has managed lockdown well. There has been no need to use a physical intervention and there have been no incidents of the young person being missing from home. Similarly, sanctions are rarely used. Staff prefer to talk to the young person and help her understand the implications of her actions.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager is appropriately qualified and experienced. She also manages another home in the organisation. The registered manager has a deputy manager to support her in this home. They are committed to improving outcomes for young people.

Staff enjoy working in the home. They receive regular supervision and say that they feel well supported by managers. They meet together regularly, and report that good communication enables consistent practice.

Staff have received training in internet safety since the last inspection. However, some staff need to attend first-aid and restraint training as a matter of urgency. The pandemic has affected the provider's ability to source this training. Two staff should have attended update restraint training prior to lockdown. Furthermore, no consideration has been given to sourcing online first-aid training as an interim measure. This is pertinent, given that staff are working alone for the majority of the time and cannot rely on working alongside someone with the required skills.

The independent visits to the home have been completed remotely during the pandemic. These have included some discussions with the young person living in the home. However, there has been a delay in forwarding the reports to Ofsted, thus preventing Ofsted from reviewing how the home is operating on a monthly basis.

The registered manager has a good understanding of the strengths of the service and the areas for development. At the last interim inspection of the home, a recommendation was made regarding the refurbishment of the kitchen and outside area of the home. The manager has been unable to progress with updating the kitchen due to the pandemic, so this remains an area for development. Similarly, while staff have painted and decorated the wall to the rear of the home, with the help of the young person, further work remains to be done here. However, staff have redecorated and replaced the furniture in the young

person's bedroom, as this was directly within their control. The young person is delighted with her new bedroom.

Some positive feedback has been received from professionals. One described the home as 'warm and caring' and another provided feedback directly to the home, saying, 'Communication between all staff has been excellent and I have been kept up to date with all relevant information. You have gone above and beyond in terms of supporting [Name of the young person].'

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and welcoming environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

In particular, refurbishing the kitchen and the outside of the house to enhance a welcoming and homely environment.

- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

In particular, staff training on the safe use of restraint and first aid.

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

In particular, that reports completed are forwarded to Ofsted in a timely manner.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC386810

Registered provider: Crossway Services Limited

Registered provider address: 2 The Calls, Leeds LS2 7JU

Responsible individual: Amanda Quinn

Registered manager: Kathleen Mitchell

Inspectors

Mandy Williams, Social Care Inspector

Sophie Thomson, Social Care Inspector

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