

SC392549

Registered provider: Duty of Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to three children with social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2016. She is also registered to manage another of the provider's homes.

There were three children living at the home at the time of this inspection. The inspector spoke to all three of the children during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
---	--

How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
---	---------------------------------

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

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 14 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/02/2023	Full	Good
22/06/2021	Full	Good
09/07/2019	Full	Good
12/06/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children are settled and live in the home for several years. This provides them with a strong sense of stability. Most children say that they like living in the home.

Children's experiences are mixed due to the quality of help and protection and leadership and management.

Children's care is not well coordinated. Although care plans set out the child's history and experience of trauma, they are not ambitious and do not detail the actions that staff should follow to inspire children's progress. This means that children's care is not well planned, impacting on the progress that they can make.

Children have good school attendance. They are helped to prepare for the school day and participate in learning. Effective communication between the home and school helps teaching professionals and the home's staff to work together to support the children's learning. When children need extra support with exams, staff do not persist or take action to address the issue.

Children like spending time in their bedrooms, listening to music, watching television, and playing on computer games. The rooms are personalised and treated as children's private space. There is still no lockable cabinet for each child to securely store personal items. This was a recommendation at the last inspection and has not been reviewed or actioned.

Prior to a child moving into the home, the manager assesses the staff's ability to meet the child's needs. Children are well prepared, including those already living in the home. The manager creates a clear plan for the child's introduction to the home, such as who should be involved, when and where. She also consults with previous carers to help understand the child's needs and what will help the child to settle. One child's previous carer said, 'the move was managed really well for what [name of child] needed. It was pitched right for their age and overall, and was textbook.'

Children are supported to have good health. They attend medical appointments and when children find these scary, children receive emotional support which enables them to feel more confident about medical care. This improves children's attendance at appointments and the likelihood of them following medical advice.

Children enjoy a variety of activities with the staff, chosen according to children's likes and dislikes. Younger children are encouraged to play, and older children are supported to socialise with friends. Children enjoy fun gatherings in the house with the staff. The staff regularly bring their pets into the home and the children enjoy the animals being around.

When children leave the home, they receive a creative memory book which shows positive memories of their time in the home and people that they have known. The books also contain information about the child's place of birth, family members and photographs of activities and key points in their lives. This helps children to remember positive times and experiences.

Children's achievements are celebrated. The staff recognise when children have done well, at home and school, making a fuss of their success. This helps children to feel positive about themselves.

Children are supported to have positive relationships with their family members and significant people in their lives. The staff facilitate this through letters, online methods and visits. Where necessary, staff accompany children to ensure that children are safe and to help family time go well. The staff recognise the value of children maintaining contact with previous carers and continuing these links. This means children develop their sense of identity.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Some risks to children have reduced. Children's individual risk assessments are detailed and identify risks to children and how the staff should respond. They are updated on a regular basis, particularly when risks to children change.

Serious incidents involving children are not always managed effectively. On one occasion, the staff delayed offering the child medical attention, and did not speak to the child about how they felt about their experience. Additionally, staff also did not inform the manager in a timely manner. The record of the manager's scrutiny of the incident did not identify these shortfalls.

Children have trusted relationships with staff, and this enables them to have conversations about difficult subjects. Staff have discussions with children, and these are recorded. However, these sessions are not well planned or structured around the child's care plan. The quality of sessions varies, some are detailed, and the record shows the conversation and materials used to help the child's understanding. In other examples, the record was brief and does not give a sense of the difference it made for the child. This impacts on how well children are helped to be safer.

When staff are concerned that children have items hidden in their bedroom, a room search is carried out. Children are present and always informed of the reason for the search. However, when prohibited items are found, the manager does not carry out a review to consider if additional checks should be completed.

Staff understand the risks posed to children when they use technology to go online. Staff regularly check children's mobile phones and computers for potential signs of children being placed at risk of harm. When these checks do identify concerns, the

staff talk with children and explain the dangers. This has been effective and reduced the number of internet related risks to the children.

Children are rarely held by staff. This is because the staff understand triggers for behaviour and use de-escalation techniques, which are usually effective. Holds are therefore used as a last resort to keep children and others safe. Written records of these incidents show most of the information required, except the location of the hold. This impacts on the quality of the record and subsequently the manager's review. Children consistently receive an independent interview; however, they are still not offered an advocate.

When children behave well, the staff provide them with rewards, which the children enjoy. Consequences are used when children's behaviour does not meet staff's expectations. However, these are not restorative. Children are not consulted about the rules and consequences, and these are not reviewed according to the child's age and development. In addition, the manager does not review the effectiveness of consequences, so it is not clear if they are making a difference to the child. This was raised at the previous inspection.

Allegations against staff are taken seriously and investigated. In one example, the manager carried out additional competency checks with the staff member to improve practice. Of two allegations made since the last inspection, only one was shared with the local authority designated officer. This means that opportunities to investigate the allegation further were missed.

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

The manager is committed and has good relationships with the children. The manager is valued and trusted by the staff and professionals who work with the home. She has a good understanding of safeguarding children and the practice standards.

The manager is responsible for leading two children's homes. Due to staffing issues across both homes, she carries out a significant amount of shift cover. The demand on her time and high workload for a long period has affected the quality of management oversight and leadership in this home. In addition, this has impacted on the help and protection of children and their overall experiences.

The provider's model of care is not well embedded. Staff receive monthly sessions with the home's therapist, and they find this useful in understanding the approach and how this should be applied in the home. The manager does not have a system in place to monitor the use of the model or its effectiveness.

The systems to monitor children's care are not effective in identifying shortfalls in practice and improving standards in the home. The provider has not supported the manager to ensure that all the recommendations and requirements made at the previous inspection were reviewed and completed. The home's development plan

does not reflect the shortfalls identified in the last inspection and therefore issues have not been tracked and monitored for improvement. As a result, some previous recommendations and requirements have been restated.

Staff supervision is not carried out in accordance with the home's policy. This means that staff experience gaps between supervision sessions instead of occurring monthly. This includes new staff who are less experienced and need additional support and guidance. When supervision does take place, it is a supportive and reflective conversation. However, records of these sessions do not show how staff are supported to progress children's plans and targets. The quality of staff supervision was a shortfall in the previous inspection.

The home conditions have improved but there are still areas of the home that require further attention, such as the decoration. Although this is the provider's responsibility, the manager's tracking system is not effective, therefore some issues are not reported and monitored. The monthly walk-around is not thorough and there are no clear expectations on how staff should help to maintain children's bedrooms. Home conditions have been raised in the past three inspections of this home.

Some documents viewed were illegible, incorrectly dated and not detailed. In addition, the home's register of children does not show where the children lived before and after they live in the home, which is a legal requirement. This impacts on the quality of record keeping and children's records.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet The Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
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. 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 the home's workforce provides continuity of care to 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; and 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)(e)(f)(h)) This specifically relates to staff receiving supervision in accordance with the home's policy, as well as the manager's oversight of the quality of children's care.	7 June 2024
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—	7 June 2024

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)(v)(vi)(vii))	
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (3)(a)(v)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) This specifically relates to consequence records being completed in a timely manner and reviewed for effectiveness.	7 June 2024

This also specifically relates to physical intervention records including the location of the hold.	
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4. (Regulation 37 (1)(2)(a)) This specifically relates to, the register for children living in the home.	7 June 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's plans are up to date and form the basis of their care. The provider should ensure that the child's plan aligns with other plans such as the placing authority care plan. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 10, paragraph 2.1)
- The registered person should ensure that children are provided with appropriate furniture, such as a lockable cabinet or drawers to securely store personal items, including any personal information. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.19)
- The registered person should ensure that all children's case records are kept up to date and are dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

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: SC392549

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Duty of Care Limited

Responsible individual: David Heartfield

Registered manager: Susan Kells

Inspector

Catherine Heron, His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024