

SC398385

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to three children who have experienced trauma which has resulted in them experiencing emotional difficulties and associated challenging behaviours. The home is privately owned and forms part of a large social care organisation which offers education and therapeutic support. The home is currently providing care for two young people.

The manager took up post in June 2020 and is in the process of registering with Ofsted.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 20 November 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Good

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

Staff provide young people with good-quality individualised care that meets their needs. Young people's views, wishes and feelings are sought, listened to and well considered. The manager and staff are successful in building positive relationships with young people, which fosters a feeling of trust and belonging for young people.

One young person's introduction to the home was positive. Staff facilitated an introductory visit to support a smooth and successful transition. This young person reports that they are happy in placement and feel safe despite some initial worries due to their previous experiences.

The manager and staff have followed the national guidance that has been put in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic. At times, this has meant that staff have needed to be creative in helping a young person to remain in touch with people who are important to them. Partner agencies shared positive feedback about the care and support staff have provided to young people during the national pandemic, specifically when there have been positive diagnoses of COVID-19 among staff and young people.

Both young people attend school on a full-time basis. Staff communicate very well with school, which enables a shared understanding about young people's progress. Discussion prior to and at the end of the school day has proved useful for staff to understand any behaviours that a young person may present with. This enables staff to take a consistent and considered approach when caring for young people.

Young people's emotional needs are well understood. There are consistent and clear strategies in place to support young people's mental health, including access to specialist agencies.

The physical environment of the home is mostly good, with the home feeling warm and welcoming. The manager has plans to address minor improvements which are needed.

The safety of children

Staff have a good understanding of young people's vulnerabilities and potential to place themselves at risk. Staff ensure that there are appropriate levels of supervision inside and outside of the home to reflect young people's vulnerabilities.

Risk assessments are detailed, thorough and in most cases updated regularly. They identify risk of harm, any known triggers and outline strategies to ensure the young person's safety. Staff understand risks well and respond immediately to ensure that

young people are safe. Staff need to ensure that all documents are consistently updated to reflect emerging and current risks.

Episodes of young people going missing from care are minimal. If young people go missing, staff follow comprehensive missing-from-care risk assessments which are developed and agreed with placing authorities. Staff follow young people and search the local area if they lose sight of them and work with partnership agencies to bring about the safe return of the young person.

Young people can, occasionally, display challenging and aggressive behaviours. Staff de-escalate such behaviours effectively. There have been two incidents when staff have needed to physically intervene to promote young people's safety. These interventions were appropriate and proportionate. Reflection following an incident is promoted and appears successful in reducing the likelihood of repetition.

Key work is completed regularly, which is specific to each young person. Staff undertake lots of positive sessions with young people, which provides opportunities for further discussion, exploration of risk and learning. There has been a missed opportunity in undertaking key work with one young person. However, there has been minimal impact due to current restrictions that are in place.

Staff are consistent in their approach to young people. This creates a sense of stability for young people. Young people respond well to routine, and staff ensure this is promoted. Staff ensure that young people's needs are placed at the centre of their practice.

Leaders and managers

The manager has been in post for six months, previously undertaking the role of deputy manager. She has applied to register with Ofsted. Both requirements previously raised are met. The manager and responsible individual have good oversight and are clear on where improvement is required. This gives the regulator assurance that there is ability to acknowledge where development is needed.

Feedback from external professionals is good. Communication is excellent and partnership working has promoted the use of monthly 'team around the child' meetings, to ensure that professionals are having regular opportunities to discuss young people's care plans.

The manager has considered whether new young people are able to move into the home. Currently, there is capacity to care for a further young person. However, due to two members of staff being off work, the manager is realistic that the current staff team would be unable to meet the needs of a third young person. Therefore, recruitment is underway for more staff.

Staff receive supervision. However, this is not always in line with company policy. Staff on probation should receive supervision on a fortnightly basis to support their

development. However, this has not always been taking place. Supervision for new staff is vital to ensure that they have opportunities to develop their practice.

Staff have access to relevant training. Although, this has been less available during COVID-19, specifically for face-to-face courses. Therefore, there are gaps in staff training. In particular, one staff member has not completed training in a key area to meet a young person's needs.

Managers and staff place the well-being of the young person at the centre of their practice, irrespective of the challenges they may present.

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 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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (2)(c))	15 January 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that a record of supervision is kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33 (4)(b). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC398385

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services (2) Limited

Registered provider address: Turnpike Gate House, Alcester Heath, Alcester,
Warwickshire B49 5JG

Responsible individual: Laura Duckers

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Ann-Marie Jones, Social Care Inspector

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