

SC398385

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

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care for up to three children who have experienced trauma that has left them with emotional difficulties and behaviours that challenge. The home is privately owned and forms part of a large social care organisation, which offers education and therapeutic support.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in February 2021.

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.

An assurance visit took place in December 2020. No widespread or serious concerns were identified.

Inspection dates: 5 to 6 May 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 20 November 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/11/2019	Full	Good
06/06/2018	Full	Good
19/03/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/06/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

The registered manager does not monitor and maintain the physical environment of the home to a good standard. Although some parts of the home are homely and personalised, this is not consistently the case. Many areas of the home were damaged and had not been repaired. The registered manager was also not aware of a number of safety hazards. This lack of oversight has the potential to compromise children's safety. The registered manager took action during the inspection to address some of the shortfalls identified.

Children do not always experience well-planned transition into the home. One child informed the inspector that he had not had the opportunity to visit the home or speak to the staff or the registered manager before moving in. This was a missed opportunity to support the child's move into the home and to obtain a better understanding of the child and their needs. As a result, the registered manager was not able to consider all relevant factors to inform the placement planning process.

Poor placement matching for a child who recently moved into the home failed to identify the potential impact on the other children. As a result, the number of significant incidents between the children increased. During some of these incidents, children informed the staff that they were scared of another child. This means that the shortfalls in the placement planning process had an impact on children's progress and led to one child leaving the home. The registered manager has stated that the mistakes made in the care planning arrangements for children moving into the home have been a 'massive learning curve' for her.

Children enjoy positive relationships with staff and interact in a relaxed and friendly manner. One child informed the inspector that staff are 'helpful, nice and they respect me' and 'they also make sure I see my family'. Inspectors saw one child sharing gifts with the staff and the registered manager as a thank you before moving out of the home. Staff had organised a leaving party and created photo albums as memories of her time living in the home to take with her. As a result, children feel valued and supported by staff.

Staff promote the importance of education for children effectively. All the children attend the company's in-house school and are making some progress. Staff have taken into account the previous difficulties encountered by one child with his education. This meant that staff were able to support the child's transition into their school setting sensitively. When children fail to attend school, staff support children to complete their school work at home. This approach allows children to make progress with their learning.

Staff support and promote time for children to spend with their families and friends. External professionals stated how pleased they were with the staff in successfully

increasing the time one child was able to spend with her family. This had a positive impact on her self-esteem and confidence. In addition, children are enjoying meeting with family and friends now that COVID-19 restrictions are easing. For example, staff have ensured that one child and his friend were able to enjoy a weekend break to a local caravan park.

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

The assessment of risk to children is inconsistent. This is because the registered manager does not always accurately assess the level of risk to children. For example, the registered manager considered one child's self-injurious behaviour to be low risk, despite the fact that there had been an increase in incidents. Furthermore, actions identified by the home's clinician to safeguard children have not been acted on. These shortfalls have the potential to compromise children's safety.

Overall, staff have managed incidents with children well and taken effective action. However, during one incident, staff failed to intervene or respond effectively to support a child when distressed and displaying physical aggression. During conversations with leaders, a member of staff stated that they had not taken action as they did not feel supported by a fellow colleague. This led to the child causing extensive damage to property and left the child without appropriate support when in crisis.

Staff do not always use the model of therapeutic parenting, which is identified in the home's statement of purpose, with children. On two occasions, staff have not shown professional curiosity to explore a child's behaviours as they become heightened. As a result, staff failed to prevent these incidents from occurring. These incidents also resulted in staff issuing consequences to the child. This means that children cannot be confident that they will receive a consistent response from staff to support them to manage their behaviours.

Incidents of physical restraint with children are low. However, there have been shortfalls in the recording and evaluation process following these. During one incident, the duration and location of the measure used by staff was not recorded. The registered manager has also failed to evaluate the effectiveness of the measure. As a result, key reflection and learning opportunities to support the children to manage their behaviour have been missed. Managers have not identified these shortfalls when they are monitoring the quality of care provided to the children.

Staff help children to understand risk by having regular conversations with the children through 'key-work' sessions. These sessions are specific and relevant to the individual needs of the children. These conversations have been successful in reducing incidents of children going missing from the home. As a result, there have been no incidents of children going missing from home since the last inspection. Furthermore, these sessions have been effective in helping children to understand the dangers of the internet when playing online games and using social media.

Safe recruitment of permanent staff who work in the home is good. However, this does not extend to agency staff who are employed to work in the home. There is a lack of attention to detail in clarifying the reason that one person has left a previous role. As a result, leaders and managers cannot be fully assured about the suitability of people they employ.

The registered manager has reviewed the home's location risk assessment. However, the mitigation of risk is not sufficiently detailed. Local risks posed by the neighbouring homes and farmland have not been included. Therefore, the assessment of local risks to children has not been fully explored.

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

There is a registered manager in the home who is currently working towards achieving her level 5 diploma in leadership and management. The manager receives support from an experienced deputy manager.

The staffing arrangements in the home have led to inconsistencies in the support provided to children. The responsible individual reported that the home has experienced substantial periods of staff absence. This has meant that staff from other children's homes in the company and agency workers have covered shortfalls in the home's rota. Children have informed external professionals of their concerns when working with strangers and unknown agency staff. During one incident, staff failed to intervene to support a child who was distressed as they were concerned that a colleague working in the home may not be able to suitably manage the behaviour displayed. As a result, children have not always received continuity of care.

The registered manager is helpful and supportive towards staff. Staff reported that she is available when they need her. During difficult periods, the registered manager has worked shifts in the home and acted as a role model to staff. This has led to increased levels of staff confidence in managing challenging incidents with children. Consequently, the number and severity of incidents for one child have reduced significantly.

Staff do not receive regular supervision to support them in their role. For example, one agency staff member had not received supervision from the registered manager despite having worked a high number of shifts. The supervision policy for the home states that non-permanent staff should receive supervision every eight shifts. Furthermore, another permanent member of staff has received only one supervision in five months. This means that staff are not provided with the opportunities to improve their practice in caring for children.

Since the last inspection, staff have completed some training courses, which are relevant to the needs of children. For example, all staff are trained in self-harm and

internet safety. Staff have also undertaken restorative justice training, which was identified as an action in one child's care plan. In contrast, some staff have not completed training in sexualised behaviour, which had been requested by the registered manager. This was requested in response to an increase in specific incidents with children in the home. This means that children are not always cared for by staff who understand their needs and have the skills to support them.

An independent person has carried out external monitoring of the home every month. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, this monitoring has been completed using virtual platforms. This arrangement remained in place after Ofsted had removed the flexibilities guidance surrounding external visits. Consequently, the systems to support the home are not reflective, and the independent visitor has not spoken to children on a regular basis. This means that children have missed out on opportunities to express their views and wishes to somebody who is independent from the home.

The registered manager has not submitted an up-to-date version of the home's statement of purpose to Ofsted. The statement of purpose has failed to include details of the experience and qualifications of staff working in the home. This prevents the reader from having accurate information about the staff working in the home.

Leaders are beginning to take action to address the home's shortfalls. The responsible individual described the support networks in place to develop the registered manager and improve the quality of care received by children. However, these actions and systems are not yet embedded in the day-to-day care delivered by the home.

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; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iv)(v)(vi)) This relates to the registered manager's assessment of risk for children when completing an impact assessment. It also relates to staff understanding and implementation of each individual child's risk assessment, and their role in keeping children safe, particularly with regards to risks of self-harm, sexualised behaviour and physical aggression.	3 June 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—	3 June 2021

that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(d)) This specifically relates to the maintenance of the home to replace broken furniture, repair of damage to the property and ensuring that hazards are identified and removed in order to safeguard children.	
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 staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; 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)(c)(e)(h)) This specifically relates to the registered manager's monitoring and oversight of the home. This relates to shortfalls in staff training on children's sexualised behaviour. It also relates to the staffing of the home and ensuring that staff provide consistent and continuous care to children.	3 June 2021
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b))	3 June 2021

This specifically relates to the care planning arrangements for children moving into the home and the fact that prior to moving to the home, one child was not given the opportunity to speak to the staff or the registered manager.	
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ('the statement of purpose') which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must— notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(b)) This relates specifically to the fact that no information highlighting the experience and qualifications of staff was included in the home's statement of purpose.	3 June 2021
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to staff receiving regular supervision in the home.	3 June 2021
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— the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration;	3 June 2021

the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (3)(a)(iii)(iv)(vii)) This specifically relates to behaviour management and the use of consequences in the home. It also relates to shortfalls in recording and evaluation of measures used by staff with children.	
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to the visits to the home made by the independent visitor. It also relates to the registered manager supporting the independent visitor to gain the views and wishes of children living in the home.	3 June 2021
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). (Regulation 46 (1)) This specifically relates to the home's location risk assessment and the need for the registered manager to review, update and include all risks to children based on the environment and home's location.	3 June 2021

Recommendations

- 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)
- The registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguard children and minimise potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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: SC398385

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Laura Duckers

Registered manager: Emma Potter

Inspector

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector

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