

SC398391

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 is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children who have been affected by adverse childhood experiences that have led to associated trauma and complex behaviours. A large national provider operates this home.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in April 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.

Ofsted last visited this setting on 29 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 17 to 18 August 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 18 June 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/06/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
01/05/2018	Full	Good
26/09/2017	Full	Good
30/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Three children currently live in the home. They are settled and have lived in the home for a number of years. Staff know them well and create a stable and nurturing environment. This stability supports children to make progress in all areas of their lives.

The home's environment is well maintained and staff create a homely atmosphere for children to live in. For example, there are photos of children in the home which celebrate their journey and identity. The home benefits from having space and so children are free to express themselves and relax. When asked, one child said the best thing about the home was the staff and that he loved having so much space to listen to his music. He added, 'It doesn't feel like a children's home to me.'

Children enjoy positive relationships with staff and each other. The inspector observed children showing appropriate affection to staff. Also, children spoke positively about the care they receive from staff and the registered manager. Staff understand children's starting points and celebrate the progress they make with them. As a result, children feel part of the home and develop meaningful relationships with staff.

Staff capture and celebrate children's memories and milestones effectively. They have created newsletters, memory books and photo albums to celebrate children's achievements and special occasions. This means that children feel like they belong in the home.

Children have access to a range of recreational activities suited to their interests. For example, two children play football for a local football club. Another child is supported to pursue his interests and he spends time with his friends. Furthermore, staff provide opportunities for children to experience holidays in the UK and abroad. For example, two children recently enjoyed a holiday in Ibiza with staff. They spoke openly about the holiday and how they had enjoyed the experience. These experiences help to create lifelong memories for children.

Staff support and promote the importance of children's education effectively. Children are encouraged to work hard, and they all attend the company's in-house school. One child has recently received his GCSE results and achieved grade 4 in English and mathematics. These achievements have ensured that he has met the criteria to progress on to a post-16 college course.

Children know how to complain and raise concerns in the home. On three occasions, when a complaint was made by a child against staff, the manager responded efficiently and effectively to resolve the issues, taking into consideration children's wishes and feelings. Consequently, children feel valued and listened to.

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

Children rarely go missing from the home. Since the last inspection, there has been one incident of a children going missing. However, staff do not always show professional curiosity to satisfy themselves that children are safe and supervised in the home. On two occasions, a child has left the home when staff thought he was in his bedroom listening to music. On one of these occasions, the child was able to spend the night away from the home without staff knowledge. Furthermore, the registered manager could not be sure that the same child had not spent more than just the one night away from the home. This lack of supervision and curiosity has the potential to leave children at risk of harm.

Staff do not always assess the risks effectively when supporting children's behaviour. For example, one child's missing-from-home risk assessment is assessed to be low. However, the action plan specifies that he is to be reported missing to the police after 30 minutes of no contact. Furthermore, the registered manager, in consultation with the child's social worker, made a decision to remove one child's bedroom door alarms and the external door alarms to the home. This meant that the child was then able to spend a night away from the home without staff knowledge. The child was also able to gain access to a large sum of money in his bank account, following a change to the conditions after his 16th birthday. Staff were unaware of this account, despite it being set up by this provider when he moved into the home. These safeguarding shortfalls left the child vulnerable and potentially at risk.

Staff carry out room searches of children's bedrooms when they have concerns for their welfare. However, on three occasions, staff completed these without informing the child. On one occasion, this led to a child becoming distressed and upset. The registered manager has taken action to address these shortfalls and required that staff read and sign the home's policy. However, not all staff have done. These actions do not respect children's privacy in the home.

Since the last inspection, there have been two incidents requiring the use of physical restraint with one child. The registered manager has ensured that staff and the child have been spoken to following each incident. This reflection allows children and staff to learn from their experiences. In contrast, there have been shortfalls in the recording of incidents. For example, the records did not specify the date and time that the restraints took place. This means that factual information is missing and has the potential to compromise the manager's oversight of staff practice.

Staff work effectively with health professionals to support the needs of children. However, there are concerns in the way medication for children is administered. On one occasion, staff administered a controlled drug incorrectly and the child had to be assessed in hospital for any potential side effects and impact on his health. Furthermore, there have been occasions when staff administered medication to a child but have not carried out checks to ensure that he has taken his medication correctly. Consequently, on two separate occasions, staff have found medication stored in the child's bedroom. These shortfalls compromise children's safety.

Staff complete key-work sessions with children to promote equality and diversity in the home. Also, the registered manager has made changes to improve the overall quality of discussions held with children. In contrast, staff did not complete follow-up work with one child in response to racist comments he had made. This represents a missed opportunity to help children to understand more about equality and diversity.

The registered manager has learned from the safeguarding shortfalls identified at this inspection. She has implemented new protocols which include very specific guidance for staff to follow when administering medication, carrying out room searches and for checking on children in the home. Furthermore, she has introduced a new format for recording children's risk assessments. This gives staff clear direction and contains strategies for staff to follow. The registered manager has debriefed staff and they have completed additional team training. As a result, her actions have improved practice and significantly reduced the likelihood of the shortfalls reoccurring.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager keeps children at the heart of all she does. She is an excellent role model and children relate well to her. As a result, she has formed strong and trusting relationships with the children over a long period of time. The inspector observed children displaying affection towards her. These relationships help children to feel safe and secure.

The registered manager is an advocate for the children in the home. She has an excellent knowledge of the children's needs and will hold external professionals to account. For example, when met with resistance from a local authority in assessing a child's educational needs, she effectively challenged the decisions made. As a result, one child has undergone an assessment to identify further support. This persistence means that children receive the required support for their needs.

There is a consistent staff team in place who provide good and continuous care to children. The registered manager regularly reviews and assesses staff's skills and performance to meet the needs of children effectively. For example, her oversight and monitoring processes have identified an increase in incidents with children linked to a particular area of the staff team. Consequently, she has made changes to the staff rota to ensure improvements. This proactive management helps to improve the care received by children.

Staff receive regular training that is specific to the needs of the children. Furthermore, training helps to develop and enhance the quality of care delivered.

The manager has good oversight of the home. She knows the home's strengths and weaknesses and uses internal and external monitoring systems to develop the quality of care in the home. The quality of care review consults with children and key professionals and this feedback is used to inform improvements in the home.

Staff are very positive about the support they receive from the management team. They receive supervision on a regular basis and describe the registered manager as 'approachable and supportive'. The registered manager uses supervision to reflect and generate ideas for improvements in the home. However, some supervision sessions are not always reflective and of high quality.

There have been some occasions when the registered manager has not informed Ofsted of an incident in the home in line with regulation. This hinders the regulator's ability to have oversight of the care children receive.

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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This specifically relates to the assessment of risk in relation to children going missing from the home.	22 September 2021
The registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected. (Regulation 21 (a)) This relates to staff carrying out room searches of a child's bedroom without informing the child.	22 September 2021
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular the registered person must ensure that— medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and to no other child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(b)) This relates to an incident when a child was given the wrong medication and incidents when staff have not carried out checks to ensure that a child has fully taken the medication administered.	22 September 2021

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. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(iii)) This relates to records of physical intervention and measures of control where the date and time have not been properly recorded.	22 September 2021
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Recommendation

- The registered person should notify Ofsted and other relevant persons if one of the situations specified in regulation 40(4)(a)-(d) occurs, or if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious (40(4)(e)). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)

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: SC398391

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: Mark Duckers

Registered manager: Charlotte Stevens

Inspector

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector

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