

# SC400355

Registered provider: Social Care Services Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private organisation. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of this inspection, two children were living at the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 14 November 2017.

**Inspection date: 20 March 2025**

**Date of last inspection:** 20 August 2024

**Judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement to be good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

## Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

No children have moved into or out of the home since the last inspection. One child spoke to the inspector about their experiences of living at the home.

The relationships between the staff and children are generally positive. One child said that staff have 'supported me to be myself'. With the staff's unconditional care, the child feels comfortable exploring their identity. Children are growing in confidence, and their emotional well-being is improving.

The staff team is stable. Leaders and managers ensure that the staff are known to the children they are working with. This helps the children to feel safe and able to talk to people they know about issues that matter to them.

Despite the efforts of leaders and managers, staff do not consistently apply strategies that promote positive behaviours. Children can become frustrated when staff expectations are not well planned or explained properly to them. For example, a child's written technology agreement does not clearly convey what they need to do and when they must do it in order to use their technology. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.

Children's records contain a significant amount of information. Staff take the time to record the children's experiences and views they have shared with them that day. This provides the children with a detailed journey to reflect on in the future. However, managers and staff sometimes use language that is institutionalised. For example, they use terms such as 'missing from care' and 'abscond', and they refer to the home as a 'site'. Such language does not promote a culture that protects children from negative stereotyping.

Staff understand the importance of children attending education. One child's attendance in education has improved since the last inspection. The child's social worker said, 'Staff could not do any more to support the child into education.' As a result, the child has made progress in their essential skills.

Staff safeguard children effectively. Incidents of children going missing from the home have decreased. When children go missing from home, staff respond quickly and effectively to ensure their safe return. However, children's risk plans require more detailed guidance for staff to follow. Although this has not affected staff's responses to children when they are at risk, it is a missed opportunity to ensure that the strategies used by staff are consistently applied.

Incidents of physical intervention with children are rare. Staff support children to express difficult emotions in healthy ways, such as writing journals. However, when

an incident occurred and a staff member used physical intervention, they failed to record it effectively. This is a missed opportunity for managers to ensure that any physical interventions used by staff are proportionate and safe.

Staff report feeling supported by managers in improving their practice. Managers hold regular team meetings that promote a culture of learning and nurture. Supervision sessions encourage staff to reflect on their practice and think about strategies they can use to better support the children. This ensures that staff remain motivated and focused on improving their care of the children.

Records kept in the home are inaccurate. Rotas do not reflect the hours worked by the registered manager and are inconsistent with the logbook in which staff sign in and out. This prevents senior managers from clearly understanding the registered manager's visibility in the home.

Leaders and managers have worked to improve the systems of monitoring in the home. The registered manager reviews all incidents and carries out regular audits to identify areas of development for staff. However, leaders and managers do not ensure that the independent person evaluates staff practice effectively. This is a missed opportunity to use the independent scrutiny of a professional to improve the service.

There have been improvements in the cleanliness of the home since the last inspection. However, leaders and managers have neglected to address several areas of maintenance. The external windowsill of one child's bedroom is damaged, a pipe on the exterior at the rear of the property is leaking, and the hallway needs redecoration. The registered manager is awaiting areas of the home to be recarpeted and the living room to be wallpapered. This is something leaders and managers are aware of and are taking action to address.

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement            |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 20/08/2024      | Full            | Requires improvement to be good |
| 21/06/2023      | Full            | Good                            |
| 09/08/2022      | Full            | Requires improvement to be good |
| 15/03/2022      | Full            | Good                            |

## 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, The 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    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(e))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff are working together effectively and that strategies they use are consistent.</p> <p>This requirement was raised at the last inspection and is restated.</p> | 16 May 2025 |
| <p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 16 May 2025 |

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| <p>ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—</p> <p>meet the needs of each child; and</p> <p>enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home.<br/>(Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii))</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that the home is maintained to a high standard and repairs are promptly addressed.</p> <p>This requirement was raised at the previous inspection and is restated.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |             |
| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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))</p> <p>Specifically, the registered person must ensure that children’s risk plans provide staff with clear guidance to keep children safe.</p> <p>This requirement was raised at the last inspection and is restated.</p> | 16 May 2025 |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>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—</p> <p>the name of the child;</p> <p>details of the child’s behaviour leading to the use of the measure;</p> <p>the date, time and location of the use of the measure;</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 16 May 2025 |

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| <p>a description of the measure and its duration;</p> <p>details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;</p> <p>the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used;</p> <p>the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and</p> <p>a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure;</p> <p>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")—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and</p> <p>has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p> <p>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.</p> <p>(Regulation 35<br/>(3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))</p> |                    |
| <p>Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4;</p> <p>ensure that the records are kept up to date.</p> <p>(Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b))</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that they keep an accurate rota of the shifts worked by all members of staff, including the registered manager.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>16 May 2025</p> |

## Recommendations

- 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) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure that the staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information about individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** SC400355

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Social Care Services Limited

**Registered provider address:** Social Care Services Group, 31 Shaw Road,  
Stockport SK4 4AG

**Responsible individual:** Annabella Foulkes

**Registered manager:** Robert McEwan

## Inspector

Sarah Gilbert, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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