

SC450994

Registered provider: Keys Direct Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care for up to four children aged between 10 and 18 years old, who experience a variety of complex needs and who need specialist support. Four children were living at the home at the time of this inspection.

The registered manager left the post on 10 June 2024.

A new manager has been in post since June 2024, they are in the process of registering with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 July 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

inadequate

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: 13 March 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/03/2024	Full	Good
23/08/2022	Full	Good
08/06/2021	Full	Good
27/11/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

No children have moved in or out since the last inspection. All four children were present during the inspection and three children were spoken with. One child chose not to share their views.

Overall, children have made progress from their starting points. However, recent changes in leadership and management have led to shortfalls in safeguarding children. A social worker said that lack of consistent staffing, and the use of agency staff who do not know children well, have had a negative effect on their child's views of living in the home.

Staff have regular conversations with children to help them understand their experiences. Often, these conversations are supportive of children and sensitive to their needs. However, staff sometimes refer to children as being manipulative. This can be perceived as child blaming. The language used by staff in records is stigmatising and does not support children to understand their behaviour in a helpful way.

All the children are in education. They are making good educational progress. Children are working towards or are meeting their individual learning targets. One child has good attendance at their mainstream school. One child has a part-time job.

Children have a variety of positive experiences. They have been on holiday, to adventure parks and football matches. Some children have had horse-riding lessons. Children have fun and new experiences with staff that help to build their confidence and self-esteem.

Staff help children to feel valued through regular rewards. Staff use games and other incentives to help children to recognise their positive behaviour.

Three children are working towards independence. Staff are helping them to make choices about cooking, cleaning and budgeting. Children are learning skills that will help them progress into adulthood. A social worker spoke positively about their child's overall progress to date and the support that core staff have provided at times of difficulty for the child.

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

The manager has not always deployed staff appropriately taking into consideration their skills, their relationship with the children and their experience of the home. Children have gone missing from care six times since the last inspection. On one occasion, this led to a child experiencing harm.

Since the last inspection, the manager has reintroduced a log for recording consequences. On one occasion, a consequence was not reviewed by the manager for 15 days, and a child was not spoken to by the manager about the consequence for 20 days. This was due to the manager being away from the home and the task not being delegated to another appropriate person. This does not provide timely oversight to ensure that children are treated fairly.

Monitoring alarms are used on one child's door and the use of this is not regularly reviewed. This does not support a homely environment for the child.

Risk-management strategies such as close monitoring of a child have not been reviewed appropriately. An identified strategy to reduce risk was removed without consultation with relevant professionals. Records of this monitoring are contradictory and do not give the rationale for the level of monitoring.

On one occasion, a manager directed staff to leave a child's electronic cigarette in the child's room overnight. Staff were concerned that removing the item would result in an incident with insufficient staff to manage it.

There have not always been enough staff working in the home who are suitably skilled to meet the needs of the children. On one occasion, there were not enough staff who were appropriately trained to hold children. This was identified by the manager, who raised it with senior leaders; however, this was not addressed. This resulted in staff being unable to hold a child during a significant incident and, consequently, the police being called for support. When staff have held children, this is necessary and proportionate to keep children safe.

Children have free time in the community. Staff support children to reduce risks and increase this free time. One child said that moving into the home 'was a blessing in disguise'.

Staff understand the risks that using the internet may pose to children. When there have been concerns around children's use of the internet, staff have acted in a timely way to reduce this risk. Children have been supported to gain an understanding of online safety through conversations with staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Since the last inspection in March 2024, the registered manager returned from long-term leave. They left their post in June 2024. The interim manager who was in day-to-day management of the home during the March 2024 inspection has now been appointed as permanent manager.

Leaders' and managers' oversight and monitoring of the home have not been effective. Consequently, a number of the shortfalls identified at this inspection had not been identified by leaders and managers.

There have been practice concerns about some staff. Managers' decisions on the deployment of staff have had a direct negative impact on children's safety. On one occasion, poor staff practice led to a child going missing and experiencing harm. Despite a significant incident happening, the manager deployed staff ineffectively on two further occasions that day. This led to a further allegation of harm from another child.

On another occasion, the manager directed a member of staff not to lone work while an incident was being explored. However, this staff member returned to full duties without clear management rationale. A further allegation of poor practice followed.

Records in the home are contradictory of each other and inaccurate. Leaders and managers could not explain why staff have signed and dated records about children when those staff were not at the home on the date that the records were signed. Other records about children's information in staff handovers is different between versions of documents. This does not help leaders and managers to have effective oversight of staff practice or children's experiences.

Since the last inspection, staff have not received regular one-to-one supervision sessions from April 2024 onwards. This included the period when there was a change in leadership and more frequent use of agency staff. New members of staff have not received supervision support in line with the home's statement of purpose. The new manager offered one group supervision session to the staff team in June 2024. Infrequent supervision sessions reduce the opportunities for staff to reflect on the children's experiences and to discuss practice issues. This also reduces the oversight that leaders and managers have of staff's skills and training needs.

Staff generally receive regular training. Two new starters are yet to complete the home's mandatory training. Some staff are yet to complete training that is specific to children's identified needs. One member of staff has not achieved a relevant qualification within the required timescale.

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
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 the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(b)) In particular, ensure that the deployment of staff and agency workers takes into consideration their skills and experiences and considers who is best able to support children's individual needs.	24 July 2024
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 has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;	30 August 2024

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; 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)(d)(e)(f)(h)) In particular, ensure that: staff have suitable training and experience to meet children's needs and that there are sufficient numbers of trained staff in the home at any time; managers provide frequent and effective supervision; managers review records to ensure that they are accurate and that they are accurately signed and dated by staff.	
The registered person must ensure that— any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (b)(c)(i)(iii)(iv)) In particular, ensure that: any use of increased monitoring of children is kept under regular review.	24 July 2024
The registered person must ensure that— 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 signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and	24 July 2024

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 (3)(b)(ii)(c))	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The requirements are that— the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform. For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)(b))	27 December 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff 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 the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: SC450994

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Keys Direct Care Limited

Registered provider address: Maybrook House, Third Floor, Queensway, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Sarika Modeshia

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Rebecca Hannell, Social Care Inspector
Andrea Bounden, Social Care Inspector

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