

SC480850

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children and/or young people. It is owned and operated by a private provider. The manager was registered in November 2019.

Visit dates: 8 to 9 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 22 October 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 identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Managers do not ensure that children's risk assessments include clear guidance for staff to follow when children are under the influence of illegal substances or alcohol.
- There have been significant shortfalls in management oversight and monitoring. This poor management practice has led to serious failings such as gaps in reporting and recording incidents of concern.
- Devices for monitoring children's safety at night are not individually risk assessed. Consequently, children experience an intrusive approach where all children, regardless of need or risk, are monitored coming in and out of their bedrooms.
- Children do not experience a consistent and fair approach. Some sanctions and boundaries imposed on children are not in line with a positive restorative approach.
- Children cannot move freely around the home at night. Some downstairs doors are locked, thus restricting children's access to these areas.

The care of children

Some children have moved on from this home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Children have been supported by staff during their discharges. For some children, staff have visited new placements with them and staff have maintained contact after their moves to make sure that children are settling in. Currently, one child lives in this home.

The child has good relationships with staff. The child can talk to staff and share any worries. As a result, the child feels a sense of belonging. The child commented, 'I love it here. This is my home and staff are lovely.'

The child's physical and emotional health is improving. The child is learning to make healthy lifestyle choices, including going to the gym and eating a healthy diet.

The child is learning skills which support them to be independent. The skills they learn include cooking, budgeting, laundry skills and self-care. The child is well prepared for the world of work and now has a part-time job. This job helps the child with their self-confidence and independence.

The child is attending education and making progress. The staff help the child to understand the importance of education and they support the child to attend school. The staff support the child by helping educational professionals to understand the child's needs so that the school can adapt its approach. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the staff have supported some children to carry on some learning at home and some children continued to access school on a limited timetable.

The child continues to enjoy a range of activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, children enjoyed a range of activities such as arts and crafts. They have tried activities at home such as tie-dyeing and chalk painting. Some activities for children

have been first-time experiences such as caravan holidays and trips to the circus. These new activities broaden children's social interactions and experiences.

The safety of children

The children complete work which helps them to understand risks such as alcohol misuse, substance misuse and going missing from home. There have been incidents where the child and other children have been missing from home and have used alcohol or illegal substances. However, there has been a significant reduction in these incidents in recent weeks.

The staff do not have clear actions to follow to manage risks to the child if they are under the influence of illegal substances or alcohol. As a result, staff are without clear guidelines to follow to make sure the child is safe in these circumstances. Recordings of some incidents involving the child consuming alcohol do not consistently include what actions staff need to take to monitor the child to make sure they are safe.

The child's bedroom door has a monitoring sensor. The use of the monitoring sensor is not individually risk assessed. Consequently, this custom and practice approach is intrusive for the child.

Children do not experience a consistent and fair approach. Some sanctions and boundaries imposed on children are not positive or restorative. Some sanctions are restrictive or incur unfair monetary fines. For example, children are fined £5 if they smoke in the house. As a result, children cannot take positive learning from these incidents.

The child cannot move freely around their home at night. This does not promote a homely environment. The kitchen door and some downstairs doors are locked, restricting the child's access to these areas.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager and the responsible individual accept that there have been significant shortfalls in management oversight and monitoring. The poor management practice has led to serious failings such as gaps in the reporting and recording of serious incidents. For example, an incident involving a child bringing other older children into the home at night was not reported. In addition, some records such as two books containing information about children's daily activities and a reparation book are lost. Consequently, personal information in relation to children is missing and the oversight of children's safety and care is limited.

The registered manager is working to improve the quality of staff supervision and staff support. Some staff say that they feel supported by the registered manager, and other staff say that they do not feel supported or listened to.

There are changes being made to the statement of purpose. The changes have taken time to implement and have caused uncertainty for children and staff. Children

were left not knowing what was going to happen to their placement at the home. This caused a period of instability and anxiety for children and staff.

The registered manager's quality of care review does not fully reflect the views of children, families and professionals. By not obtaining views of children and others, the registered manager is missing opportunities to learn what is working well for children and what can be improved.

The registered manager works with other professionals to make sure the children receive the support that they need. The registered manager works with the police, social workers and teachers.

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))	22 January 2021
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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b))	22 January 2021
No measure of control or discipline which is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (2) may be used in relation to any child. The following measures may not be used to discipline any child—	

imposing a financial penalty, other than a requirement for the payment of a reasonable sum (which may be by instalments) by way of reparation. (Regulation 19 (1)(2)(f))	
The registered person must ensure that— children can access all appropriate areas of the children’s home’s premises; and 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)(ii)(iii)(iv))	22 January 2021
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the child’s placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; and the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child’s need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d))	22 January 2021
The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (5))	22 January 2021

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC480850

Registered provider: Hexagon Care Services Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 1 Tustin Court, Riversway, Preston PR2 2YQ

Responsible individual: Andrea McKeown

Registered manager: John Oxley

Inspectors

Jamie Richardson, Social Care Inspector
Gemma McDonnell, Social Care Inspector

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