

SC482668

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It is registered for four young people. The home currently provides care for one child, aged between eight and 17, who has experienced adverse childhood experiences that have led to associated trauma and presenting complex behaviours.

An experienced and qualified manager has been in post since August 2020. She has applied to register with Ofsted.

Visit dates: 6 to 7 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 11 December 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Not judged

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

The care of children

Children develop trusted relationships with staff. They have open discussions, and staff support children to make informed decisions. Key-work sessions focus on the needs of children and their experiences. Staff educate children about a range of topics including staying safe, racism and COVID-19. As a result, children share their worries and concerns with staff without fear of judgement and gain valuable insight into key issues.

Staff support children to keep in touch with family and friends. This has continued during the COVID-19 pandemic, even when it has not been safe to see people face to face. Safety measures to manage COVID-19 are good, with social distancing and personal protective equipment in place. Children know about COVID-19 and how to keep good hygiene to reduce risk to themselves and others.

Staff support children to participate in hobbies, develop areas of interest and try new activities. Children plan their meals with staff. One child expressed that they wanted to eat a vegan diet, and staff facilitate this. Children have a weekly meeting with staff. They raise concerns, talk about what they would like to do and reflect on the previous week. Young people feel listened to.

Children attend school and continue to learn. When possible, children remain at the same school they attended prior to coming to live at the home. This provides them with continuity. Staff and professionals work together to meet children's educational needs, and this supports their progress.

Staff promote children's health needs well. Children access emergency and planned routine appointments with staff support. Staff record some information about children's injuries and accidents. However, they do not consistently record the dates and times when injuries occur. This limits the manager's ability to review and identify any concerns.

The safety of children

Managers and staff understand and manage children's individual risks effectively. Detailed written plans enable staff to identify risks and apply agreed strategies to de-escalate incidents. This helps to keep children safe.

Staff engage children in positive activities to discourage them from going missing from home. When children do go missing from home, staff search local areas and places where children are known to visit. They collect and return children to the home after missing periods. Importantly, children are welcomed back. When children

decline independent return meetings, staff use their positive relationships to gather information about what happened when they were away from the home. This enables staff and professionals to review, assess and manage risk well.

As a last resort, staff use physical intervention to stop children from hurting themselves or others. Staff encourage children to complete restorative tasks following incidents to help them to learn from what has happened. However, incident records do not consistently detail the child's name, the location where the incident took place and a detailed description of hold applied. On one occasion, the effectiveness of a hold used was not reviewed by staff and the manager. Incomplete records of physical intervention incidents do not meet regulation. Furthermore, this means that the manager does not maintain effective oversight and help staff and children learn how to manage things differently.

The home's location risk assessment does not include all known risks in the local area. To date, this has not had any impact on children's welfare but, if not rectified, this has the potential to do so.

Leaders and managers

The manager is very child focused and has a clear vision for the home. The management and leadership in the home are strong.

The manager understands the home's strengths and areas for development. She has plans in place to ensure that the home continues to progress, and this helps to improve the quality of care for children.

Recruitment practice requires improvement. For example, gaps in employment history for a member of staff have not been identified and explored. Shortfalls in recruitment processes have the potential to place children at risk of harm.

Communication between the manager, staff and professionals is good. One professional stated, 'They liaise with me regularly. I work with many care homes, and the team here is very strong and staff are very clear.' Good communication and collaborative working support children to receive coordinated care.

On one occasion, the manager did not report a serious concern about a child to Ofsted. This compromises the external oversight of children's safety and well-being.

Staff feel well supported in their role. The manager meets with each member of staff at least once a month to reflect on practice and support their personal development. Team meetings are held regularly. This strengthens consistency, enabling them to deliver effective care and support to children living in the home.

The provider is effective in managing COVID-19 and has used the flexibilities permitted by the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 responsibly. Independent visitors undertook remote visits during lockdown and

so continued to provide some external oversight and feedback to support the home's development and promote children's safety.

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 registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(1)(2)(a)(b)(3)(d))	22/11/2020
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 name of the child; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(a)(iii)(iv)(vi))	22/11/2020
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—	22/11/2020

include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;	
are kept up to date; and	
are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36(1)(a)(b)(c))	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—	22/11/2020
there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	

Recommendations

- When establishing the home, the registered person must ensure that it is suitably located so that children are effectively safeguarded and can access services to meet needs identified in their relevant plans (see regulation 12(2)(c)). Under regulation 46, the registered person should review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC482668

Registered provider: Hexagon Care Services Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Mark Dunn

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Helen Malanaphy, Social Care Inspector
Jodie Lewis, Social Care Inspector

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