

SC490364

Registered provider: Blue Mountain Homes Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned. It provides care for up to five children aged between 10 and 17 at admission. Children may have social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

There is no registered manager at present. A newly appointed manager will start work at the home soon.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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: 5 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
06/02/2019	Full	Outstanding
06/06/2017	Full	Good
30/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

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

The home has gone through an unsettled period. There have been significant changes in management and the staff team in recent months, which have had an impact on the consistency of care. As a result, children have not made consistently good progress.

Children are not consistently provided with healthy and well-balanced meals. Processed or takeaway fast food has frequently been provided. This does not support children to be healthy or to understand the value of balanced, nutritious meals. However, healthcare arrangements are generally strong. Children receive consistent support from staff to attend healthcare appointments. Staff take appropriate action to escalate any concerns that they have about children's health to specialist services.

Children's records are not always written in a way that shows empathy or understanding. In some cases, records lack emotional warmth and do not capture children's progress and experiences. As a result, information is not currently recorded in a way that would be helpful to the child if they were to read it. Managers are aware of this issue and have credible plans to bring about improvement.

Some parts of the home are well decorated and provide a homely environment for children. However, other parts of the home are worn and tired. Maintenance systems are not effective. As a result, damage is not repaired quickly enough.

Despite changes in the management and staff teams in recent months, relationships between children and core members of staff have remained positive. Children spoke with confidence about how well they get along with these staff members. The quality of these relationships means that children feel generally well cared for, supported and safe. Staff spend good-quality time with children because they understand that this is important in the development of strong bonds. One child said, 'Staff are all really good. I can talk to them about anything, and they understand me.'

Managers and staff place great value on supporting children's education and helping older children find employment. Children attend school, have tutors or are in employment. Staff do not give up on children when they are finding it difficult to engage in education. Staff have built strong relationships with education providers and work with them to develop bespoke education packages. Children are beginning to value their learning and becoming more aspirational.

Staff support older children to learn independence skills and become more self-sufficient. One child is learning how to budget and has started to plan and prepare

her own meals. Developing these skills means that children become increasingly confident as they prepare to live independently.

A strength of the home is the ability of staff to support children's relationships with their parents and people of significance to them. For example, one child now has regular visits to their family. Staff communicate well with families, sharing important information and ensuring that families have a voice in decision-making.

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

Staff generally have a clear understanding of children's vulnerabilities and know what action to take to protect children. However, some risk-management plans are based on inaccurate or confusing information. Plans do not always provide staff with clear guidance on how to respond to risks. For example, one plan states that a therapeutic model must be used but does not set out how staff should do this. Plans were amended during the inspection to provide the required guidance.

Managers are taking steps to improve behaviour-management approaches so that there is less reliance on sanctions to manage behaviour. However, staff continue to rely on, sometimes punitive, sanctions that are not in keeping with the new restorative approach.

The use of physical intervention has significantly reduced in recent months. Staff have received training that equips them with the skills that they need to carry out physical intervention safely. However, records of restraint do not contain all required information. This limits the capacity of managers to review staff practice. If children choose not to share their views with staff soon after a restraint has taken place, they are not asked again. This is a missed opportunity for children's wishes and feelings to be heard.

Missing-from-home incidents are generally responded to appropriately by staff. Staff liaise with the local police to ensure that children are located as quickly as possible and safely returned. Children are welcomed back by the staff. However, there are occasions when independent return home interviews have not been completed by the placing local authority. Managers have not always challenged this shortfall effectively.

Children's views are listened to and respected by the staff and management team. Regular house meetings take place, in which children can raise any issues that they feel are important. Children know how to make a complaint. When complaints are made, these are thoroughly investigated. The management team responds to children in a timely manner, providing them with a clear explanation of complaint outcomes.

Children have a trusted adult that they can talk to if they are worried or upset. Children receive effective support from staff to regulate their emotions safely. Because staff understand children's backgrounds and previous life experiences, they

are empathetic and reassuring. Over time, children become increasingly resilient and develop better coping strategies.

Staff have regular discussions with children in relation to keeping safe online. As a result, children are able to recognise potential risks. Staff monitor children's use of social media and the internet by carrying out regular checks. This promotes children's safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager left the home in February 2022, following a long period of absence. Although a new manager has been appointed, they have not yet started work. Meanwhile, interim arrangements that were put in place while the registered manager was away are ongoing. Staff have found these arrangements to be supportive and have confidence in the organisation's senior management team to restore the home to a good standard.

Training arrangements are not yet good enough. It has taken too long to source specialist training required to meet the needs of children. As a result, some staff have not completed important training, such as training around deprivation of liberty orders and self-harm. A plan is in place to rectify this shortfall quickly.

Not all staff have received regular supervision. As a result, staff have not been provided with regular guidance or formal support. The lack of regular supervision also limits opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice. This does not support staff to develop and improve.

Senior managers have a clear vision for the service. They have taken steps to improve quality assurance and monitoring systems, but this is not yet embedded in practice. Senior managers are also implementing a new, more therapeutic, approach to care. This is likely to improve children's experiences in the home. Interim managers have ensured that relationships with other agencies are very strong. Communication and information sharing are effective, ensuring that children have access to the services they require.

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 health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans; and understand and develop skills to promote the child's well-being. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(iv)) This specifically relates to ensuring that children are provided with healthy and nutritious meals.	11 April 2022
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; help each child to understand how to keep safe;	11 April 2022

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; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(b)(d)) This is specifically in relation to ensuring that risk assessments reflect the needs and identified risks of the children, providing guidance on how staff should respond to the assessed risks. It also refers to ensuring that maintenance work is completed in a timely manner.	
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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; 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)(c)(f)(h)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that staff receive all the required training to meet the needs of children. Additionally, it relates to the improvement of monitoring and review systems and the supervision and development of staff.	11 April 2022
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out—	11 April 2022

how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and

the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home.

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—

details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;

the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used;

the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and

a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure;

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 spoken to the user about the measure; and

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 (1)(a)(b) (3)(a)(v)(vi)(vii)((viii)(b)(i)(c))

This specifically relates to ensuring that records of restraint include all required information, and ensuring that children are spoken to following an incident to seek their views, wishes and feelings.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that 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 on 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)
- The registered person should ensure that, when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority provides an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. The home should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

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: SC490364

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Blue Mountain Homes Ltd

Registered provider address: 17, Leeland Mansions, Leeland Road, London W13 9HE

Responsible individual: Pradeep Manaktala

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Zoey Lee, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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