

SC068827

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a local authority and provides care for up to four children with social and emotional difficulties.

The manager has been registered since July 2022.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 December 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **inadequate**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor, and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 25 August 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/08/2021	Full	Good
22/08/2019	Full	Good
25/10/2018	Full	Good
26/03/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Since the last inspection, four children have moved out, one child has remained living in the home, and three new children have moved in.

As a result of the significant failures found at this inspection, the provider has been issued with two compliance notices; one under regulation 12, the protection of children standard, and the other under regulation 13, the leadership and management standard.

There is a significant failure in making sure that children can make progress, are safeguarded and that management oversight is effective.

Despite staff holding regular discussions with the children around the risks of using cannabis and alcohol, some children continue to be at risk. The risks associated with illegal drugs and the underage drinking of alcohol are not decreasing and children continue to be at significant risk of harm.

Although some children are making progress in their education and have good school attendance, this is not consistent across the home. Some children have made no progress in their education and refuse to attend school. Children often spend all day in their bedrooms asleep and then go out into the community in the evening and find themselves at significant risk.

Strategies for managing behaviour in the home are not always appropriate, and staff often need to seek police assistance to manage children's behaviour. In addition, not all consequences given to children are recorded. For example, a child who was found to be smoking cannabis in the house had an activity stopped. This is not proportionate to the event and was not written up as a consequence. This is a missed opportunity to review staff practice and to develop strategies to support children.

Children live in a spacious home, with ample outside space to enjoy. However, there is damage around the home caused by the children during incidents. Temporary repairs are made, meaning that some internal doors and a window have been boarded up while awaiting repair.

Children who are known to smoke cannabis in the house have removed some of the fire detection equipment. This has not been suitably replaced or the risk mitigated, despite this being requested by the registered manager. This has left children, staff and visitors at serious risk of harm.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Staff do not safeguard children effectively when they go missing from the home. For example, one child was not reported missing, despite it being required by their risk assessment, on more than one occasion. This child is experiencing criminal exploitation and is often in danger and unsafe when they are in the community. Furthermore, the manager's monitoring has failed to identify this risk.

Staff do not always take effective action when children are at risk. For example, during the inspection period, one child, who is at high risk of criminal exploitation, returned home late in the evening with an unknown male and was suspected of taking drugs that were supplied by another child in the home. The staff left the child outside and returned to the house. Subsequently, the child was reported missing and later arrested and taken to hospital.

There are shortfalls in the safer recruitment of staff. This was highlighted at the last inspection. The local authority conducted an internal audit in August 2022 and highlighted gaps in records of police checks, employment history and references. However, no update was provided on the progress to ensure that staff are now safely vetted, nor were any risk plans provided to cover the interim period. The registered manager demonstrated that some work has been actioned, but this does not show that all staff have been suitably vetted.

Staff do not always respond to children appropriately when they ask for help. On one occasion, a child called staff for help after being assaulted in the community. The lack of immediate action by staff left the child highly vulnerable and in danger, and the child made a complaint. The registered manager dealt with this complaint and there was a resolution meeting to restore the relationship.

Children have not been protected from each other and have been involved in serious incidents. For example, one child witnessed another child from the home assaulting someone, which involved a knife. Following this incident, this child refused to return to the home, telling staff that he felt unsafe. Consequently, the child was taken on 'holiday' while plans were put in place for the other child to move out of the home. Following this, a learning review was completed by the registered manager which ensured that practice was strengthened, and that staff and children received support.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager was only available to join the last part of the inspection due to annual leave commitments and the responsible individual was not available during the inspection due to unavoidable circumstances.

There are significant gaps in the availability of records that the inspector could view during the inspection. This demonstrates weaknesses in the management systems and oversight of the home.

Staffing insufficiency has impacted on the care and protection of children. For example, during the inspection, there were staffing shortages and agency staff were working in the home. A visitor was seen to be let into the home, despite them not providing identification. The visitor was then allowed to move around the house alone.

Records demonstrate shortfalls in staff training, including in important topics, such as safeguarding children, first aid and supporting children with issues associated with illegal drugs and alcohol.

The registered manager was unable to demonstrate the outcomes of some safeguarding matters. This included the action taken and decision-making. There were gaps in staff supervision records. Consequently, it was difficult to ascertain whether staff are receiving frequent supervision sessions with their line manager.

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
<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;</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare; and</p> <p>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)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(b))</p>	<p>15 January 2023</p>
<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 promotes their welfare.</p>	<p>15 January 2023</p>

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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))</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>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that all staff, including agency staff, make sure that all visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised.</p>	15 January 2023
<p>The health and well-being standard is that—</p> <p>the health and well-being needs of children are met;</p> <p>children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and</p> <p>children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff help each child to—</p> <p>understand the child’s health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child’s health and</p>	15 January 2023

<p>well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding;</p> <p>understand and develop skills to promote the child's well-being. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(ii)(iv))</p> <p>This specifically relates to children's health needs being met in relation to the use of drugs and alcohol, as well as appropriate support with their sexual health needs.</p>	
<p>After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must—</p> <p>take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment in the children's home. (Regulation 25 (1)(a))</p>	15 January 2023
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that each child's relevant plans are followed;</p> <p>that the child's placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child's relevant plans is requested, if—</p> <p>the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child's needs. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(c)(e)(i))</p>	15 January 2023
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children's home if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>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) (3)(d))</p>	15 January 2023

<p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. (Regulation 8 (1))</p>	<p>15 January 2023</p>
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* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair and the above principles as set out in 9.35 are respected. In particular, ensure that records are made when sanctions are given to children. (Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards Paragraph 9.36 page 45)

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: SC068827

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Quadrant Court, 35 Guildford Road, Woking, Surrey GU22 7QQ

Responsible individual: Scott Hampshire

Registered manager: Christine Hamilton

Inspector

Sara Stoker, Social Care Inspector

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