

SC401927

Registered provider: Benecare Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by a limited company. It provides care and support for up to four children with social and emotional difficulties. There were three children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 July 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 20 June 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/06/2023	Full	Good
27/02/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
01/03/2022	Full	Inadequate
06/08/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The three children enjoy living at the home and are making good progress. They said that the home is good and staff take care of them. Consequently, children have positive experiences.

Children benefit from various activities that they choose. Staff ensure that activities are arranged and help children to be safe during them. Staff support one child who has recently moved to the home to continue attending a club that she enjoys, despite this being some distance away.

The relationships between children and staff are strong and positive. These allow staff to support children to make good progress. Furthermore, children generally accept staff's guidance.

Staff understand the importance of education. One child has completed their exams and is planning to start college in the next academic year. Arrangements are in place for another child to re-engage in education from September. However, another child has not been attending school. In response, managers are working extensively with other professionals and the virtual school to secure an appropriate education provision for them.

Children generally enjoy spending time together. Staff use good de-escalation techniques to help children move away from potential conflict.

Children communicate their wishes and feelings to staff and managers. When their requests cannot be met, staff sensitively explain why this is the case.

Children know how to make a complaint, and managers acknowledge these. However, the outcome of some complaints is not clear, and feedback to children does not always cover all the areas raised or correspond fully with their initial concerns.

Staff support children to develop their independent living skills in an age-appropriate way. This is done gradually and in a way that is tailored to their needs. One young person can now travel to their family home independently because of the support that they have received. Consequently, children are better prepared for adulthood. Staff understand the importance of children spending time with their families and support them to do so safely.

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

Potential and current risks are understood and managed appropriately by staff. Each child has individualised risk assessments that staff adhere to. Documents are updated regularly and inform staff about the actions that they should take.

Staff manage children's behaviour well, and as a result, children's behaviour improves. Restraints have not been used at the home because staff are able to use their relationships and other de-escalation techniques to help children stay safe. The home's recording practices are good. The manager completes in-depth and meaningful debriefs with children and adults after incidents occur.

Children sometimes go missing from the home, but these incidents are rare. When children leave the home or do not return as agreed, staff invest effort and time to find them. Staff report children as missing to the appropriate agencies and always check children's welfare on their return. However, despite a strong response to individual incidents, staff do not consistently educate children about the wider risks that they may face when away from the home.

When children harm themselves, staff respond sensitively. They offer first aid, ensure that children are safe and seek specialist advice when required. However, staff do not consistently explore the triggers for children's behaviour or alternative strategies that children could use.

Any safeguarding concerns are responded to without delay. Managers ensure that appropriate professionals are notified and children are protected from harm. Records are generally clear and evidence what action was taken in each case. On one isolated occasion, a manager previously employed at the home did not take effective action to confirm the outcome of the referral that they had made. Consequently, it was unclear what action other agencies had taken. Leaders acted during the inspection to address this.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A new management team has recently been appointed, consisting of a new manager and responsible individual. Both are experienced professionals who worked at this organisation for over a decade and were already very familiar to the children. The changes made to the management team were carefully planned. Consequently, there has been no negative impact on the children, who continued to receive good-quality, consistent care.

Monitoring and review systems are effective and help managers to identify key areas of strength and weakness in the service. Managers have a good understanding of children's needs and work hard to create positive experiences for them.

Managers are recruiting to ensure that all vacant posts are filled, as some staff have left the home since the last inspection. Again, leaders have managed this well and have ensured that children's care is not disrupted.

Staff supervisions are regular and of good quality, allowing staff to reflect and develop their professional skills. One member of staff said that they know what their developmental pathway is and praised the new manager for investing their time in staff development.

Managers are transparent and reflective. They seek to continually identify learning, which they filter to all staff during team meetings. When one child made a complaint, staff discussed this and reflected as a group to identify what could have been done differently. This resulted in professional growth for staff and improvements being implemented in the home.

The home is safe and secure. However, some children's confidential files are stored in a room that is not always kept locked. This has the potential to compromise children's privacy.

Recruitment practice is generally strong. Most checks are thorough, and managers insist on seeking full references from all relevant previous employers whenever possible. However, on one occasion, an incorrect application form was used. Consequently, there was a lack of clarity about the dates of a candidate's previous employment.

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
<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>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(ii)(vi))</p>	9 September 2024
<p>The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (3))</p>	9 September 2024
<p>Case records must be kept—</p> <p>securely in the children’s home during the period when the child to whom the case records relate is accommodated there; and</p> <p>in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 36 (2)(c)(d))</p>	9 September 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they maintain good employment practice. In particular, the employment history of candidates should be obtained in the format of years and months. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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: SC401927

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Benecare Limited

Registered provider address: The Thatch Vine Farm, Stockers Hill, Boughton-under-Blean, Faversham, Kent ME13 9AB

Responsible individual: Lauren Walczak

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sonata Brisley, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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