

# 1224674

Registered provider: Hopscotch Solutions Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home provides care and accommodation for up to seven young people who have autism and learning disabilities. The home is privately owned and managed.

**Inspection dates:** 19 to 20 December 2017

**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 failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

**Date of last inspection:** 8 March 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** improved effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** None.

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This children's home is inadequate because:

- Young people have been put at risk of harm because the registered manager lacks understanding of how to manage and respond to allegations.
- Allegations against staff have not been reported to the appropriate safeguarding agencies.
- There is a lack of transparency in the investigation of allegations against staff. For example, outcomes from internal investigations are not shared with the designated officer for the local authority (DOLA).
- Outcome letters to complainants are misleading. Although internal investigations found that allegations were unsubstantiated, the letters suggest that staff will be subject to disciplinary procedures, and will receive additional training.
- Formal discussions with staff, to address shortfalls in practice, are not recorded. There is therefore little evidence of the registered manager supporting the staff to improve.
- The regulator, Ofsted, has not been notified about the allegations made against members of staff. This means that the regulator has not had the opportunity to review the registered manager's response.

The children's home's strengths

- Young people are happy living in this home. They have generally warm and nurturing relationships with staff. They become better at communication, and learn to manage their own behaviour.
- Transitions to and from the service are completed at a pace that suits the individual young person.
- The home is a learning environment. This enables young people to make significant progress, particularly in their life skills.
- Young people have many opportunities to voice their views, wishes and feelings.
- Staff are highly supportive of contact arrangements for young people. They will facilitate visits to and from families to ensure that young people maintain these important relationships.
- Staff know and understand the young people really well. Targeted interventions promote young people's health and well-being.

## Recent inspection history

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Inspection judgement</b>
08/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
26/04/2016	Full	Good

## 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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</li> <li>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</li> <li>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</li> <li>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies (Regulation 12(1) and (2)(a)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)).</li> </ul> <p>In particular, ensure all allegations against staff are reported to the appropriate safeguarding agencies and respond accordingly to their direction. Ensure that outcomes of internal investigations of allegations against staff are reviewed by the designated officer for the local authority (DOLA). Ensure that outcome letters to complainants are not misleading. Ensure that formal discussions with staff are recorded.</p>	31/01/2018
<p>Notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40(4)(c))</p>	31/01/2018
<p>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff, seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation (Regulation 5(d)).</p> <p>In particular, ensure that staff seek a professional relationship with the designated officer for the local authority.</p>	31/01/2018
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the</p>	31/01/2018

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—  
demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—  
feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and  
use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home (Regulation 13(1) and (2)(g)(ii)(h)).

In particular, ensure that governance and management oversight protect children from being put at risk of harm.

## Recommendations

- Any sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. In some cases it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to anyone hurt by their behaviour and the staff in the home should be skilled to support the child to understand this and carry it out. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Young people have not been appropriately safeguarded on two occasions because the registered manager has not followed the relevant safeguarding procedures. She has demonstrated a lack of understanding of how to manage and respond to allegations. This has meant that young people have potentially been put at risk of harm.

Nevertheless, young people are very happy at this home. They enjoy their experiences and the opportunities offered to them. They make exceptional progress, particularly in their life skills, behaviour and communication. A social worker said: 'He has made excellent progress since moving there, both academically and also holistically. He has grown in confidence and in his independent living skills.'

Young people are introduced into the home at a pace that suits them. For some, this could be a very gradual introduction over a long period of time, and for others there will be no previous visits prior to moving in.

This individualised approach has helped young people to settle quickly into the home. Similarly, leaving the home is also done at the pace that suits the young person's individual needs.

Young people learn lots of new skills that will help them to successfully transition into adulthood. For example, they enjoy cooking. Some are cooking for themselves every day. Young people also learn about money and its value, road safety and personal hygiene. They have good opportunities to access public transport and shop in the local town centre.

Staff have generally warm and nurturing relationships with young people. They genuinely care about them and want the best for them. A parent said: 'My son has developed excellent relationships with the staff at the home and makes it clear that he is happy in their company.'

Young people are in good health. They are registered with healthcare professionals and attend their healthcare appointments. Some young people need extra help with overcoming anxieties about healthcare appointments; this is given by way of social stories. Medication is securely stored and safely administered.

Young people are encouraged to eat a healthy diet. Those who have specialist diets are catered for well. For example, a young person on a diet that is very restrictive is able to cook her own treats from a recipe book that staff have compiled. This ensures that when others are having treats, she also has something that she likes.

Young people enjoy going to school. All young people access the on-site school and have excellent attendance. They are making significant progress from their starting points. Care staff support young people throughout the school day. This promotes a consistent approach.

Staff understand that positive relationships with family are important to young people. They facilitate and support visits to and from families. They ensure that families feel welcome and have the time and space to enjoy time with their children. A parent said: 'I feel I am able to be his mum again and staff have really helped me with this.'

Staff follow very clear and detailed care plans. These plans help them to provide carefully targeted interventions. For example, some young people who struggle to communicate verbally are now starting to use full sentences. A social worker said: 'Work on her communication skills has been amazing. She will use a whole sentence to ask for her iPad now.'

Young people are given many opportunities to voice their views, wishes and feelings. This is enhanced by regular visits from a professional advocate who has taken the time to get to know the young people and help them to feel comfortable in her presence. This has resulted in one young person feeling able to talk to her about how he is feeling about the home and his impending move to adult services.

Young people enjoy a wide range of activities. These include going out to restaurants, museums, the cinema and youth clubs, as well as walks in the woods and trips to the seaside. Some young people particularly enjoy trampolining in their garden and at local trampolining centres. Cycling, arts and crafts, reading and games are also popular. The home is very well resourced. The wide range of activities helps young people to grow in confidence and self-esteem.

The environment is homely. Pictures of the young people are displayed on the walls. Young people have single bedrooms that are personalised to their taste. Communal areas are spacious, clean and well maintained.

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

Allegations against members of staff are not addressed robustly. On two occasions, the appropriate safeguarding agencies were not informed about allegations made against staff. A member of staff was allowed to continue to work with young people after an allegation of assault was made. This has potentially placed young people at risk of harm. An internal investigation was carried out on both occasions without consultation with the DOLA.

Nevertheless, young people feel safe. Parents confirm that their children feel safe. A young person said that he feels safe because 'the care staff really look after me'.

Staff have a positive approach towards supporting young people to manage their own behaviour. Young people respond well and make significant progress. A parent said: 'My son is now showing that he can self-regulate his behaviours when he is upset about something. He was previously unable to do this. As a result, he is much happier in himself.'

Staff know and understand the young people really well. This means that when the young people are feeling anxious or upset, the staff are aware of this and follow very clear behaviour management plans to help them to feel calm again. A young person said: 'If I am angry or upset they try to find out what the problem is.' Incidents occur, but not frequently. The manager provides good analysis of incidents and identifies learning points. This helps to keep the number of incidents low and demonstrates good insight into why young people behave as they do. Physical intervention is only used as a last resort and is used appropriately. The manager's analysis is reflective and helps to reduce the number of incidents of physical intervention.

Young people understand the incentive and sanction schemes. However, sanctions are not recorded well; for example, records often do not state the length of time a sanction has been given for and young people do not appear to be given the chance to earn back any privileges that are removed.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

The registered manager does not clearly understand how to manage and respond to allegations made against staff. There has been no correspondence with the DOLA or other safeguarding agencies when allegations against staff have been made. The internal investigation for one of the allegations made has not been not robust and the actions taken cannot be evidenced. Additionally, the outcome letters to the complainants are misleading, suggesting that disciplinary procedures will be invoked and staff will undertake additional training. Disciplinary action was not taken and no additional training has been offered to the staff concerned. Furthermore, there have been no formal, recorded discussions with the staff concerned. The registered manager is therefore unable to evidence how staff have been supported to improve their practice.

Ofsted was not notified of the allegations made against staff. This means that the regulatory body has not had the opportunity to review or monitor the investigation.

The registered manager is relatively new, but is very well qualified. Staff feel very well supported by her and the other managers who make up the management team. She is passionate about providing a good service and has good plans for moving the service forward.

The registered manager is trained as a designated safeguarding lead, and has delivered extensive safeguarding training to the staff team. Although she displays a good overall knowledge of safeguarding issues, she has she has failed to respond appropriately to allegations made against staff.

Staff are highly motivated to provide a good service for the young people. Some staff are qualified and others are undertaking an appropriate qualification. They have access to a good-quality training programme. This means that they have the skills and knowledge to ensure that young people thrive, and are well looked after.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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:** 1224674

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Hopscotch Solutions Limited

**Registered provider address:** 1 Merchant Place, River Street, Bolton BL2 1BX

**Responsible individual:** Charles Tosan

**Registered manager:** Amy Merchant

### **Inspector(s)**

Joanne Vyas, 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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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