

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC462809
Inspector	Natalie Burton
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	ERA Care Limited
Registered person address	Unit G22 Allen House The Maltings, Station Road Sawbridgeworth Hertfordshire CM21 9JX
Responsible individual	Stephen Milton
Registered manager	Francis Williams
Date of last inspection	21/01/2014

Inspection date	14/05/2014
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Previous inspection	good
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **declined in effectiveness**.

The service has appropriately addressed the requirement raised at the previous inspection. Staff have accessed on line training for child sexual exploitation. In addition, team meetings discuss this learning. As a result, staff are provided with the skills and knowledge to further protect children.

During this inspection a number of concerns were raised. The home's living environment has declined. This is because there has been some damage to the home as a result of incidents of challenging behaviour, such as, damage to walls and doors. As a result, this does not provide for a comfortable and homely environment throughout the whole of the home.

Young people are reported missing in line with the home's missing person procedure. However, this has not reduced episodes of some young people going missing. In addition, written records do not show all the action taken to encourage young people home, and there is a lack of robust action taken to locate young people. The care and support provided to young people is not minimising the risk that they will go missing. As a result, there are times when young people are missing from the home with limited action being taken to ensure their prompt and safe return.

The Registered Manager carries out a regular monthly review of the conduct of the home. The report outlining the review is kept in the home. However, internal monitoring have not identified concerns in this report or improvement in the quality of care provided in the home. For example, some young people's records have not identified conflicting information or sought further information to seek clarity. In addition, the system does not include all the required areas that are to be monitored. For example, the action taken following recommendations from the homes independent visitors report. As a result, monitoring within the home lacks

effectiveness.

The home has a Statement of Purpose. However, it does not include all the required areas. For example, a description of the surveillance used within the home and the home's approach to monitoring of the children. This does not ensure that children, placing authorities and interested parties are fully informed of the services that the home provides.

Some young people's health is not adequately met in all areas. Some young people smoke and use cannabis. While there is some evidence of staff speaking to young people with regard to the effect of this on their health and some young people have recently been referred to substance misuse agencies, this is not consistently implemented. This does not ensure that young people are fully knowledgeable regarding the risks to their health, or are actively discouraged.

The service has on occasion admitted young people whose needs have not been fully assessed. For example, there is a lack of identifying fully all the needs of the young person and the mix of young people already living at the home. Staff have struggled in some incidents to control young people's challenging behaviour, some young people assault and racially abuse their peers, and physically threaten staff, and police have been called to deal with high levels of violence. In addition, while young people are involved in discussions with management following these incidents, there is a lack of formal support for staff to openly discuss incidents, the impact on them and to manage their own feelings. This has impacted on the quality of care, and on occasion on the welfare and safety of staff and young people.

Some young people make good progress in this home with regards to their education, and do well in their educational achievements. Others are supported to attend education within the home. Some young people are positive about the care they receive and report to have good relationships with the staff and can talk to staff. Some young people feel safe, secure and cared for in this home. Young people said they 'liked living here' and 'staff spend time with you'. A social worker reported 'the home is very hands on and keep me up to date'. A further improvement is the change of independent visitor. Staff spoke positively of this recent change and how this would provide them with clear guidance of the areas of improvement needed and of the good practice within the home. There is a commitment from the manager and staff within the home to improve outcomes and raise the standard of care within the home for young people.

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides care and accommodation for three young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/01/2014	Full	good

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
5 (2001)	keep under review, and where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose (Regulation 5(a))	30/06/2014
9 (2001)	ensure having regard to the size of the children's home, its statement of purpose, and the number and needs of the children accommodated there, carry on or manage the home with sufficient care, competence and skills. Specifically around the assessment of needs of children admitted to the children's home (Regulation (9)(1))	30/06/2014
20 (2001)	promote and protect the physical, emotional and mental health of the children accommodated in a children's home. With particular regard to young people who smoke and or are missing from the home (Regulation 20 (1))	30/06/2014
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at least once in every three months and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. (Regulation 34 (1)(a and b))	30/07/2014

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure staff are supported to manage their responses and feelings arising from working with children, particularly where children display challenging behaviour or have emotional issues. Staff are supported to understand how children's previous experiences can manifest in challenging behaviour (NMS 3.10)
- ensure staff actively search for children who are missing, including working with police where appropriate (NMS 5.5)
- ensure written records kept by the home when a child goes missing detail action taken by staff, the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given by the child for running away, and any action taken in the light of those reasons. This information is shared with the responsible authority and where appropriate the parents (NMS 5.10)
- ensure entries in records are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguish as far as possible between fact, opinion and third party information (NMS 22.4)

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.