

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	15/06/2015
Unique reference number	SC405985
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	Vacant
Inspector	Natalie Burton

Inspection date	15/06/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Adequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
<p>The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection</p> <p>This home was judged Adequate at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has declined in effectiveness.</p> <p>At the last inspection, five requirements and three recommendations were set. The manager informs the local authority of the admissions and discharges of young people at the home, thereby enabling them to have the knowledge of the number of looked after children in their area, and where they live.</p> <p>The young people live in a home that is physically safe. The manager has ensured that any long blind cords are secured and where necessary, to prevent intentional or accidental harm of young people, the company have installed window restrictors.</p> <p>The manager has made improvements to some documentation within the home. The company's safeguarding policy has been submitted to the local safeguarding board for review, to ensure it is in line with the local authority's policy. In addition, the manager has put in place a record for all admissions to the home, that staff keep up-to-date.</p> <p>The staff receive training in recording of medication. As a result, competent staff administer young people their medication.</p> <p>The company provide staff with all mandatory training. However, it has not provided all staff with specific training, for example; training to help staff understand young people's behaviour, and with regard to child sexual exploitation. Therefore at times, young people are cared for by staff that are not fully able to meet all of their needs.</p> <p>The manager has taken no action to improve the system of monitoring within the home, and the current system continues to not improve the quality of care, or provide for consultation with young people. This fails to provide the young people with an opportunity to feedback about the quality of the service that they receive. In addition, the system fails to inform staff of the progress young people make, and the input from the staff that helped to make a difference to improve young people's experiences.</p>	

During the inspection a number of concerns were raised. While managers were aware of some of the shortfalls identified within this report, due to the high number of incidents, they have not been able to take action to address these issues.

Staff do not consistently report that the young people are missing in line with the home's missing policy. While on some occasions staff take robust action to ensure that young people are safe, through making sure that when young people have left the home, they follow them until they return; this is not consistent. On occasion there is a lack of proactive action taken when a young person has informed staff they were leaving late at night. Staff did not continue to follow the young people and there is a lack of searching for young people when they are missing. Also, on occasions, staff did not report young people as missing immediately due to high risk concerns of sexual exploitation, in line with their risk assessment. Therefore, staff fail to consistently keep young people safe. In addition, the company do not ensure that a person independent to the home speaks to young people to try to understand their reasons for leaving the home.

The staff do not consistently implement the company's behaviour management policy, therefore young people are not provided with clear boundaries of the expectations and acceptable behaviour within the home. Some staff lack a clear understanding of why young people behave in the way they do, due to their previous or current experiences. At times, appropriate response are not provided and incidents quickly escalate. This is because staff do not possess the necessary skills to de-escalate incident's, or to help young people to develop strategies to resolve issues in a positive manner. The young people and staff do not always receive debriefs, so that they can reflect on the situation, and consider what they could all have done better, and what went well.

Young people receive inconsistent messages. Such as; one day after being abusive to staff they went to the cinema, another day they were given a measure of control for not doing as staff requested. On occasion, staff lack an awareness of potential risks to young people, such as leaving fabric conditioner out, when there was a young person known to self-harm. As a result, and due to the impact of the manager not addressing concerns immediately, there has been an increase in incidents which has resulted in young people not being kept safe at all times.

The home is decorated to an adequate standard. However, to ensure there is a welcoming environment throughout the home some improvement is required. For example, during the inspection, it was noted that the carpet on the stairs is fraying in places, and the upstairs bathroom has a rusty shower curtain holder.

Some young people have had positive experiences living at the home, and made sufficient progress. The young people who have moved on from the home, have either returned home or moved to another placement in line with their care plans. They have benefited from a stable staff team, and the staff have made a positive

difference to their engagement in education, with one young person now fully attending school in his new placement.

It was noted during the inspection that a young person has a good relationship with their keyworker, who engaged with the young person throughout the day. The young person was able to reflect on the progress that they had made, including a significant reduction, until recently in his absconding since living at the home, no offending behaviour and engaging in education. These are significant changes for this young person.

The staff have supported some young people to have positive family contact and relationships, this has helped improve young people's self-esteem. Young people are provided and engage in new experiences and interests, such as golf, swimming and going on trips to places they have not previously been to. Therefore young people's horizons are broadened. Other young people have increased their self-esteem, family contact and relationships with their family have improved with the support of the staff. Staff are able to build positive relationships with most young people, and spoke with a good understanding. A social worker stated that the communication from the home was 'excellent' and that the staff are 'really helpful', to the young person.

Since the last inspection, the Registered Manager has left the company. In the interim period until the new manager started, the company took sufficient action through the appointment of an acting manager. However, despite starting at the home following the company's recruitment process, the new manager left after the first day with immediate effect. The acting manager has recently accepted the position of manager of the home and is in the process of registering with Ofsted. This has had a positive impact on both staff and young people.

The manager is committed to making the improvements required to ensure that the home is well managed and services provided to young people in line with the homes Statement of Purpose.

Information about this children's home

A privately owned organisation manages this home. It provides care and accommodation for three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/11/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
02/10/2014	CH - Full	Inadequate
18/03/2014	CH - Interim	Satisfactory Progress
31/05/2013	CH - Full	Good

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

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 (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the missing child policy") setting out the steps taken, and to be taken, to prevent children from being absent without permission; and the procedure to be followed, and the roles and responsibilities of persons working at the home, in relation to a child who is, or has been, so absent (Regulation 34 (4)(a) and (b))	10/07/2015
<p>12: The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard with particular reference to children and young people are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. The registered person must ensure that staff:</p> <p>(2)(a)(vi)) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare.</p>	10/07/2015
<p>6: The quality and purpose of care standard</p> <p>In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard with particular reference to the care children and young people receive. The registered person must ensure that staff:</p> <p>3) (c) (i) that the care meets the child's needs; has the experience, knowledge and skills to deliver that care. In particular with regard to training in child sexual exploitation and understanding behaviour.</p>	10/07/2015
<p>11: The positive relationships standard</p> <p>In order to meet the positive relationship standard with particular reference to children and young people are helped to develop,</p>	10/07/2015

<p>and to benefit from, relationships. The registered manager must ensure that staff:</p> <p>(2)(iv) help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone,</p> <p>(vii) help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitive or harmful relationship,</p> <p>(ix) understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;</p> <p>(x) are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same;</p> <p>(xi) de-escalate confrontations with or between children or potentially violent behaviour by children.</p>	
<p>13: The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that:</p> <p>(2)(e) ensure that the homes workforce provides continuity of care to each child;</p> <p>(f) 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>(g)(ii) feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received and</p> <p>(h)) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p>	<p>10/07/2015</p>

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that the home provides a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of their children. They will in most cases be homely, domestic environments. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 15, paragraph 3.9)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection 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

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

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