

## Children's homes inspection - Full

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>3 June 2015</b>
<b>Unique reference number</b>	<b>SC431807</b>
<b>Type of inspection</b>	<b>Full</b>
<b>Provision subtype</b>	<b>Children's Home</b>
<b>Registered person</b>	<b>SWAAY Child and Adolescent Services Limited</b>
<b>Registered person address</b>	<b>46 Chiltern Cres, Earley Reading RG6 1AN</b>
<b>Responsible individual</b>	<b>Gerard Berry</b>
<b>Registered manager</b>	<b>Vacant</b>
<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Chris Peel</b>

Inspection date	3 June 2015
Previous inspection judgement	GOOD
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
<b>This inspection</b>	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
<b>how well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	GOOD
<b>the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT

**SC431807**

## **Summary of findings**

### **This children's home provision requires improvement because:**

- This home has been without a registered manager for approximately three months, during which time the head of residential services has been covering. The previous holder was only in post for a matter of weeks and before that an interim manager from another home in the group was managing. The disruption has had a significant impact on leadership in the home, particularly in regard to supervision, recording and monitoring.
- There are significant omissions in logs and case files are in a poor state demonstrating that young people's care has not been properly recorded and the home's performance insufficiently evaluated.
- The number of staff on shift has not been enough to do more than manage and work with the young people, leading to administrative tasks being given inadequate time. Staff also acknowledge that they have not been able to deal with some difficult behaviour on anything more than an immediate basis with longer term behaviour management plans not put in place. This has meant some minor behavioural issues have gone unchallenged.
- Young people have also commented on behaviour they believe amounts to bullying which has been addressed by staff but this has not resulted in a reduction of incidents.
- Complaints are not always followed up or responded to in a way that indicates to a young person that it is being taken seriously.
- Supervision has not been provided on a timely basis until very recently, leading to some staff feeling unsupported and without direction; they knew they were not doing as good a job as they wanted to but did not believe they had the support of senior managers to improve the situation.
- A recently appointed deputy manager has identified major areas of weakness and has begun to rectify short comings in the home's performance. This is encouraging but as he acknowledged it will take time to 'get to first base'. A new registered manager is being actively recruited.

### **The children's homes strengths**

- The quality and purpose of care as described in the Statement of Purpose is fully embedded in the culture of the home.
- Newer staff express satisfaction with their induction and with the support being offered to them by the wider organisation. As a group all staff have a high regard for each other and their young people.

- All young people have positive relationships with most if not all members of staff.
- This provision for young people has largely been maintained, despite the difficulties described, by a comprehensive placement planning process and the recording of these on a regular basis.
- Young people have been making progress and professionals are very positive about the work being done at the home.
- In three weeks the deputy manager has created changes that have engendered confidence in his ability to 'turn things around', including that of young people, staff and senior managers. One member of staff said the difference made was 'astonishing'.

## 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
In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard ensure each child is helped to understand how their views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child, particularly if it is decided not to pursue a complaint. (Regulation 7 (2) (a)(iii))	16 July 2015
In order to meet the leadership and management standard must 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 and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care. (Regulation 13 (2) (g)(ii) & (h))	16 July 2015
Obtain full and satisfactory information in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2 – including verification so far as reasonably practicable of the reason why previous employment ended. (Regulation 32 (3) (d))	16 July 2015
Maintain records which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3, are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1) (a-c))	30 June 2015

\* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

## **Recommendations**

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

Ensure that repairs are carried out and damaged furniture and equipment replaced as soon as is practical to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations 3.9 p15)

Ensure children are regularly reminded about the possibility of enlisting the support of an advocate and/or an independent visitor (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations 4.16 p23)

Ensure supervision enables staff to reflect and act upon how their own feelings and behaviour may be affected by the behaviour of the children they care for, particularly so that they can effectively address bullying and other challenging behaviours. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations 8.15 and 8.16 p39)

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

The service is a four-bedded children's home registered for boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The home is owned and operated by a private organisation that specialises in the assessment and treatment of male adolescents who have experienced abuse. The organisation also provides educational and therapeutic training.

### Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/02/2015	Interim	improved effectiveness
03/06/2014	Full	adequate
13/01/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
18/09/2013	Full	adequate

## Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Requires Improvement</b>
<p>The quality and purpose of care as described in the Statement of Purpose is fully embedded in the culture of the home. All staff are well aware of the 'golden rules', why they are in place and are able to hold these boundaries. All but the most recently admitted young person understood them, seeing them as ways of keeping themselves and other people safe.</p> <p>The young people are making progress: one took pride in having attended school since being placed when he had not gone for the previous six months. Another was described by a professional as 'no longer as threatening but able to verbalise his feelings better; educational progress is good, he is going to college in September, and something not considered possible a year ago.'</p> <p>Considerable emphasis is placed on gaining skills for independence with young people motivated by rewards for doing daily tasks. One said that he does much more here than he used to when at home, 'it's a new me, even my parents are shocked!' There is the potential to move on to a new semi-independence home within the group and one young person has recently done so. The move was well supported, including staff here working with him after he had left, assisted by a comprehensive placement plan.</p> <p>Young people have good relationships with staff, seeing most as working for their best interests. When asked who he would go to if needing to talk about something sensitive one young person replied he 'could go to all staff'. House meetings and daily 'goals meetings' allow young people to contribute ideas and suggestions about how the home is run as well as reviewing their own progress and that of peers. This is particularly effective in giving them a realistic view of how far they are meeting agreed aims.</p> <p>That said, young people have felt the impact of not always having enough staff available, commenting that some appointments had been missed as there was no one to take them, or being told very late about having to attend. Two said that they don't know how a weekend will be handled; some staff wake them in the mornings to plan the day while others let them sleep in so they can get on with paperwork.</p> <p>Staff and boys agree that immediate behavioural difficulties within the home are dealt with but long term change has not been achieved. One young person commented that when staff diffuse an incident and say, 'go to your room' it means 'forget about it' adding that a complaint he wanted sent to Ofsted was never dealt with. Poor record keeping includes logs of complaints not being made.</p> <p>Recent recruitment and an increase in numbers on shift has led to an improvement</p>	

in the situation. Young people commented that they asked for more drivers and this is now the case. Staff feel more confident about addressing issues such as the number of breakages and diet that had previously been passed over.

Contact is facilitated well, with families welcomed at the home or young people escorted to meet them. One parent found the level of supervision occasionally overbearing, depending on the member of staff, but most found them supportive.

One young person is to have an advocate to assist him to raise concerns with his placing authority but others did not know about the possibility of such support and none knew about the role of independent visitors. The home had brought information to their attention since recommended at the last inspection but it requires reinforcing. The opportunity to allow the young people to have a stronger voice was missed at a critical time. This is particularly significant given that all the young people live outside their home authorities some distance from other forms of support.

	Judgement grade
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Good</b>
<p>Shortcomings identified in the inspection have had less of an impact on young people that might be expected largely because of a comprehensive placement planning process and recording of these on a regular basis. This ensures progress is kept under observation, plans adjusted as necessary and new aims set. However, they do not in all cases reflect the actions identified in Looked After Child reviews, which has left some with no evidence of being followed up.</p> <p>Impact risk assessments appropriately balance the particular needs of the young people referred against other factors, such as distance from families. For example, when identifying difficulties changing schools the organisation put in place a tutor who knew the relevant examination board and provided transport and overnight accommodation so the young person could still take exams at his previous placement.</p> <p>A regime of close supervision coupled with rewarding progress and positive regard sets the parameters in which the home works with young people. Professionals and families believe the home is addressing their sexually harmful behaviours and that they are 'in the best placement'; one parent commented, 'we can't ask the staff to do more.' There is, however, a realistic acceptance that progress can be 'fragile' with there often being 'two steps forward and one back'.</p> <p>Child sexual exploitation is a complex area for the organisation as a whole but is one in which it engages with the Local Authority Designated Officer, MAPPA meetings and the local police. There is effective training for staff which is both internally and externally provided.</p>	



Young people seldom go missing, with only one having absconded since the last inspection. High levels of supervision and plenty of opportunities for young people to address issues are factors in this. Help is also given to enable a young person to de-escalate potentially volatile situations and so learn that they have the capacity to manage strong emotions.

Management of behavioural difficulties within the home, as already described, is not yet consistent or effective. Young people have concerns about behaviour that disrupts activities or makes them feel unsafe. Individual instances are dealt with and seldom get out of hand but the potential for intimidation is often present. The deputy manager is putting strategies in place to help young people resolve conflict; stronger leadership and an empowered staff group is required to ensure control is seen to be with the adults in the home, elements that are being addressed.

The recruitment of new staff has been robust, except for not always demonstrating that verification for the reason previous employment ended has been sought.

	Judgement grade
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Requires Improvement</b>
<p>There are significant omissions in logs and the lack of evidence of effective monitoring goes back well beyond the most recent management cover arrangements. Case files are also in a poor state so that recording overall cannot demonstrate that care being offered to young people is being monitored or the home's performance is properly evaluated. It is encouraging that the new deputy manager has quickly identified these weaknesses, but worrying that covering arrangements in place did not pick up or address obvious failings. Regulation 44 visit reports have not been helpful in this regard either.</p> <p>Areas that have been addressed by the deputy include arrangements for the administration of medication, fire and health and safety procedures, the use of sanctions and the recording of all of these. Staffing levels have been increased when young people are not at school or college as shown in an improved staff roster. Supervision that had been sporadic is now planned. A monitoring log keeps track of the implementation of new procedures and if progress is being made as well as issues still to be addressed. Some positive effects have already been felt but there is a considerable way to go.</p> <p>Improvements still need to be made in regard to addressing and recording complaints, missing from care records and ensuring case files contain all required information, including that from local authorities. In addition, changes introduced</p>	

need to be fully and consistently implemented.

The décor of the home is good but some items of furniture and kitchen equipment have suffered damage and not yet been repaired or replaced. One young person has duct tape holding cupboard doors shut in his room that need a more effective solution. Moving the sleeping room is planned and this will free up room in the office, which will make this a more effective and conducive space to conduct administrative tasks. However, even changes planned have not been drawn into written development plan; the home's managers currently do not have a comprehensive overview or demonstrate how they will promote continual improvement.

Although staff have felt unsupported and the Responsible Individual acknowledged that the home has been isolated within the organisation the most recently appointed staff have benefitted from a thorough induction process, provided by staff outside the home. Training has been tailored to help them meet the needs of the young people the home caters for and staff such as the safeguarding manager and therapists have been available to help. Generally the staff have been a cohesive group but work could be done to ensure more consistency on such things as portion sizes at meals, wake up calls, activity planning at weekend and the level of supervision during contact with family.

The placement plans have provided the basic structure for the home to meet the needs of young people when other recording processes have failed. Similarly the home has been able to maintain progress despite the lack of leadership through what the Responsible Individual described as the 'quite overwhelming' commitment of staff.

## What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

## **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 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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