

## Children's homes inspection - Full

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>22/07/2015</b>
<b>Unique reference number</b>	<b>SC055912</b>
<b>Type of inspection</b>	<b>Full</b>
<b>Provision subtype</b>	<b>Children's home</b>
<b>Registered person</b>	<b>Verve Life Limited</b>
<b>Registered person address</b>	<b>198 High Street, Burbage, MARLBOROUGH, Wiltshire, SN8 3AB</b>

<b>Responsible individual</b>	<b>David Powell</b>
<b>Registered manager</b>	<b>Post Vacant</b>
<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Julia Wright</b>

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>22/07/2015</b>
<b>Previous inspection judgement</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
<b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>	<b>A compliance notice was issued on 19 March 2015. A monitoring visit was undertaken on 1 April 2015.</b>
<b>This inspection</b>	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
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>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<b>the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>

## SC055912

### Summary of findings

#### **The children's home provision is requires improvement because:**

- The home has been without a Registered Manager since May 2014. A new manager has been in post for three months.
- The new manager has identified priorities to improve the quality of care for young people, although these are not yet embedded in practice.
- Young people do not receive sufficient support to develop age appropriate independence skills.
- An allegation against a member of staff was not referred to the Designated Officer, contrary to the home's safeguarding policy.
- Some recordings of incidents require more detail.
- Staff do not always proactively advocate for young people to other professionals to ensure individual needs are met.
- Not all staff are confident in understanding the home's safeguarding practices.
- Policies, including the safeguarding require review.

### **The children's home strengths**

- The new manager has been in post a short time and has made progress with improving the standard of care for young people.
- The manager has made changes to the management structure of the home, enhancing and strengthening the leadership team.
- The manager has prioritised staff development. This enables staff to meet young people's needs more effectively.
- Positive relationships exist between young people and staff.
- Staff are confident in working with behaviour support plans. Staff work consistently together to promote positive behaviour.
- Young people's families are made welcome in the home and staff support young people's contact with their families in the community.
- Young people all attend full time school and staff liaise effectively with education professionals. Young people's education is promoted within the home through help with homework and attendance at parent's evenings where appropriate.

## 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
<p><b>5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met.</b></p> <p>In order to meet the quality standards, the registered person must ensure that staff –</p> <p>(c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans.</p>	31/08/2015
<p><b>6: The quality and purpose of care standard.</b></p> <p>In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard and in particular, that standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to –</p> <p>(b) ensure that staff -</p> <p>(vi) help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult.</p>	31/08/2015
<p><b>12: The protection of children standard</b></p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, in particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure –</p> <p>(2)(a) that staff -</p> <p>(vii) are familiar with and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies.</p>	31/08/2015

## **Recommendations**

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

- ensure staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 62, paragraph 14.4).
- Supervision of staff practices should ensure that individual adults in the home are engaged in the safeguarding culture of the home so they understand what they would need to do if they found other staff misusing or abusing their position to the detriment of the safety of a child. (The Guide to the Quality Standards page 43, paragraph 9.14).
- ensure that policies for the protection of children are reviewed regularly. (The Guide to the Quality Standards page 44, paragraph 9.19)

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a private provider and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people with learning disabilities, two of whom may also have physical disabilities.

### Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/02/2015	CH - Full	Inadequate
07/01/2015	CH - Full	Inadequate
13/08/2014	CH - Interim	Declined in effectiveness
30/07/2013	CH - Full	Adequate

## Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	<b>requires improvement</b>
<p>Young people say they are happy with their lives at the home. One said, 'I love it here, I don't want to leave'. A parent said, 'My son has made fantastic progress'.</p> <p>Young people benefit from positive and supportive relationships with a committed staff team. There is a warm, lively atmosphere in the home. Young people are comfortable with staff and enjoy their company. Young people are aware of changes in the home and they say they feel involved. For example, young people meet new staff before they join the team and they tell senior staff what they think of candidates. There are a couple of staff vacancies, and a small number of agency staff are used to cover shifts due to vacancies and holidays. Changes of staff are minimised meaning that young people are looked after by people who know them well.</p> <p>Young people make progress with their education. Their achievements are valued and celebrated. For example, two young people received head boy awards from school and the praise and recognition from staff increased and promoted their self-esteem and self-confidence. Communication between school and staff is good. Young people have seamless care as daily contact is maintained via a home – school communication book and through emails and telephone contact. Staff and school keep each other informed of areas of progress and difficulties enabling appropriate steps to be taken if necessary.</p> <p>Young people's health needs are promoted by staff. Where significant incidents have happened at the home, resulting in an escalation of behaviour, effective liaison between staff and child and adolescent mental health services have ensured young people's needs are speedily addressed. Young people benefit as they receive prompt and appropriate help. Staff have a safe and secure system for managing young people's medication. This means that they are only given medication prescribed for them, administered by trained staff, and this is safely and securely stored.</p> <p>Young people say that they are involved in planning their free time. They say that staff listen to them and ask them what they would like to do during holidays. During the inspection, one young person was preparing for a trip to London, a favourite destination, others enjoy local trips and use community facilities – libraries, parks and swimming. These opportunities are enhancing involvement in community life. Young people's voices are heard through daily dialogue with staff, attending young people meetings and one to one sessions. Young people are</p>	



confident that their worries will be addressed. For example, one young person expressed some concerns about his interaction with a staff member, but was confident and reassured that this would be sorted out by intervention of the manager.

Whilst young people help with some chores around the home, and complete some self-care tasks, the progress towards adulthood is not planned and reviewed. Developing young people's independence is often ad-hoc. This limits young people developing the skills which will help them as they move into adulthood and begin living independently. Targets and plans do not identify specific areas to work on. For example, buying food with a budget, developing telephone skills or negotiating buying items in a shop.

Young people retain contact with their families wherever possible, enhancing their understanding of their backgrounds and identities. Staff support young people's contact in the home and in the community. One parent said, 'I always feel welcome when visiting my son at the home. The staff are brilliant and I always know how my son is doing there'.

	Judgement grade
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>requires improvement</b>
<p>A recent allegation was not reported to the Designated Officer contrary to the home's safeguarding policy. This allegation did not have the independent oversight of the Designated Officer and the home did not respond in a transparent way to promote the safety and welfare of young people. In addition, an incident report relating to this allegation did not clearly explain the context for staff actions. This may be confusing for young people who read these reports as it did not record all the details that happened during the incident.</p> <p>Home policies, including the safeguarding, need updating to reflect legislative changes. Not all staff are confident about the safeguarding policy relating to allegations against staff. Consequently, the safety of young people is placed at risk by staff not having sufficient knowledge to protect them from harm.</p> <p>Incidents of bullying are rare and appropriately addressed by staff through one to one sessions and discussions at young people's meetings. Difficulties between young people are addressed as staff have devised a reward system encouraging positive behaviour between young people. This has been effective and promotes a more positive atmosphere in the home with less incidents of challenging behaviour.</p> <p>Staff communicate well with each other about young people and share knowledge</p>	

and skills in supporting them. Young people are helped to redirect their anxieties and concerns towards talking to staff or focussing on an activity, rather than behaviour escalation. Young people understand that staff are available for them. They learn to self-regulate their behaviour leading to a more harmonious atmosphere.

There have been no incidents of young people going missing from care, or having unauthorised absences since the last inspection. There are strategies in place to identify and respond to individual needs. Young people are closely supported by staff inside and outside the home and any emerging difficulties are quickly addressed through liaison with other agencies.

Young people's safety is further promoted through the appropriate vetting of staff. There are effective and safe recruitment practices in place meaning that young people are protected from adults who may wish to harm them.

Staff are vigilant in ensuring the home is safe and secure. Regular checks are undertaken of equipment ensuring that it works well and poses no risk to young people. Fire drills are regularly completed and fire equipment serviced to ensure that it functions properly. All staff and young people are conversant with the fire drills and the need for evacuations from time to time to maintain vigilance and safety for all. The vehicle used by the home is regularly checked and any repairs speedily rectified. Young people's safety and security is prioritised because of these arrangements.

	Judgement grade
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>requires improvement</b>
<p>The home has been without a Registered Manager since May 2014. A new manager has been in post for three months and she has made an application to Ofsted to become the Registered Manager. She is an experienced manager and has made progress in improving the service provided to young people. The manager is supported by a skilled deputy manager. The manager has changed the staff structure to further enhance and strengthen the leadership team.</p> <p>Staff are positive about recent changes and feel supported in the work they undertake with young people. They receive regular supervision and practical day to day support from managers. The manager has developed a schedule for staff training meaning that young people are cared for by knowledgeable staff who understand their needs.</p> <p>The manager has devised systems to review and update policies, procedures and</p>	

other information relevant to young people. These systems are in place but not yet fully operational. The manager works closely with the independent visitor and addresses any shortfalls identified in his report ensuring that young people receive a responsive service. The manager knows the strengths of the home and has prioritised areas for development. She has short and long term goals to improve the overall care young people receive.

Young people make progress from their starting points. For example, one young person has achieved having his IPAD all day, rather than for short periods, in response to improvements in behaviour. Another has settled back at the home after future plans were changed. All young people have responded positively to the introduction of a reward scheme. One said, 'I look forward to my treats. I like to choose something I like'.

There is a detailed and thorough statement of purpose which on the whole reflects the aims and objectives of the service and the facilities it provides. There is a shortfall where the statement of purpose states that the home 'maximises young people's independence' as this inspection found that there was not a rigorous approach to measuring independence outcomes for young people.

The manager and staff have mainly positive relationships with other professionals. Professionals commented, 'The new manager has made a big difference to the home. The service is more responsive. She works well with me'. Other professionals expressed reservations that actions are not met speedily enough.

Whilst liaison with other agencies takes place, staff do not always effectively challenge other professionals where there is a shortfall in the service they provide to young people. Young people's progress is delayed and they face uncertainty about their future.

Young people live in a well decorated and well maintained, homely environment. The high standards within the home enhance young people's self-esteem and self-confidence.

Requirements made at the last inspection have been met. A new manager has been appointed and is making improvements to the service offered to young people. Complaints are clearly recorded including actions taken. This means that young people know that adults listen to their complaints and take them seriously. All staff receive supervision. A training and appraisal schedule is now in place. Consequently, young people are looked after by staff who are supported and skilled. The manager has effectively addressed the previous compliance notice. Self-monitoring reports are now sent into Ofsted. This means the regulator is able to review how well the home is driving forward improvements in care for the benefit of young people.

## 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*.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted*, which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, workbased learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It inspects services for looked after children and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

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)  
W: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2015