Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	**16/09/2015**
Unique reference number	**SC448997**
Type of inspection	**Full**
Provision subtype	**Children's home**
Registered person	**Moonreach Limited**
Registered person address	**28 Castle Street, DOVER, Kent, CT16 1PW**

Responsible individual	**Linda Cowie**
Registered manager	**Fern Cowie**
Inspector	**Stephen Collett**

Inspection date	**16/09/2015**
Previous inspection judgement	**N/A**
Enforcement action since last inspection	**None**
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	**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.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	**Requires improvement**
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	**Requires improvement**

SC448997

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- The admission procedure is not robust enough to ensure only young people whose needs can reasonably be expected to be met, are admitted to the home.
- The home has admitted young people whose needs are beyond those identified in the homes statement of purpose.
- Behaviour management policies and procedures have not been evaluated and amended to address anti-social behaviour.
- Risk management processes are not always an effective tool for minimising the risk of young people coming to harm.
- Recruitment procedures are not thorough or sufficiently robust to prevent unsuitable adults becoming employed at the home.
- Staff do not receive an appropriate level of training to develop the skills to support young people with mental health difficulties.
- Unnecessary restrictions are placed on young people's access to communal areas of the home.

The children's home strengths

- A stable and committed team of staff prioritise the need to develop positive and supportive relationships with young people. Promoting young people's welfare is at the centre of their practice.
- Leaders and managers maintain good working relationships with other professionals, and advocate strongly for young people to receive specialist support when necessary.
- Staff work effectively with parents. This enables well planned contact to take place and supports the smooth transition for young people who are returning home.
- Young people receive encouragement and support to engage in education, helping them to overcome previous negative experiences.
- Robust policies and procedures for responding to young people going missing are understood by staff and implemented in practice.
- Leaders and managers demonstrate a positive attitude towards regulatory inspection and a commitment to addressing shortfalls in good practice.
- Young people receive a sensitive welcome to the home, and some quickly respond to boundaries and expectations. Where this happens, young people become less likely to be at risk of harm.

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**
11: The positive relationships standard In order to meet the positive relationships standard, with particular reference to managing children's behaviour, the registered person must ensure that staff: 11 (2) (a) (ii) help each child to develop socially aware behaviour.	30/11/2015
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard with particular reference to risk management, the registered person must ensure that staff: 12 (2) (a) (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child.	30/11/2015
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference to how new admissions impact on the quality of care, the registered person must: (2) (f) understand the impact that the quality of care 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.	30/11/2015
14: The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard, with particular reference to children admitted to the home, the registered person must ensure:	30/11/2015

(2) (a) that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose.	
Ensure that any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises is necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 21 (c) (ii)). This specifically relates to communal areas of the home being locked at night.	30/11/2015
Recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. (Regulation 32 (1)). This specifically relates to investigating historic disciplinary procedures.	30/11/2015
Ensure that all employees undertake appropriate continuing professional development. (Regulation 33 (4) (a)). This specifically relates to the development of knowledge and skills regarding adolescent mental health.	04/12/2015
Keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. (Regulation 35 (2)). Specifically, ensure the effectiveness of the policy and associated strategies are monitored.	30/11/2015
Help the independent person, if consent is given, to interview in private such of the children's parents as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (2) (a))	30/11/2015

Recommendations

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

Ensure children are able to take up issues or make a complaint with support; specifically, ensure young people have the opportunity to address their concerns, such as the quality of care, through the complaints procedure. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 23, paragraph 4.13)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home which is registered to provide care and accommodation for a maximum of two young people, with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/02/2015	Full	Good
14/11/2014	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
14/03/2014	Interim	Good progress
02/10/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	**Requires improvement**

A committed staff team work hard to develop positive relationships with young people. They seek to provide a stable environment where young people begin to address the impact of past negative experiences. The complex needs of the residents has, in recent months, presented staff with many challenges. However, staff have remained focused on promoting the young people's welfare and discouraging them from engaging in unsafe behaviours.

Some young people make good progress towards transition, making successful moves back home. This is partly attributable to effective planning and the good communication staff maintain with social workers and parents. However, not all young people have been able to develop a sense of belonging or permanence at the home. Staff have not been able to meet the needs of some young people and maintain consistent boundaries. This has resulted in unplanned endings for some residents.

A pro-active approach is taken to securing specialist help for young people. This includes escalating concerns when partner agencies are perceived not to be meeting their full responsibilities towards a young person. The provision of specialist help and guidance has ensured that some young people have initially experienced better mental health, and made good progress towards becoming more independent. However, this good progress has not always been consistently maintained, partly due to the complexity of need of some young people.

Staff are sensitive to the needs and feelings of young people when they are admitted to the home. One young person said 'it was scary at first, but staff soon made me feel welcome'. This approach ensures young people feel listened to, and gives them the confidence to share any concerns they have with staff.

Young people are further encouraged to express their views in regular young people's house meetings and individual key-work sessions. These are well documented in residents' case files. Young people are familiar with the complaints procedure, and have used this to resolve issues relating to their care. However, managers and staff have not consistently recognised some negative comments as complaints. Consequently, on one occasion the complaints procedure was not implemented to address a young person's concern regarding the quality of care.

Many of the young people have experienced disruption to their education prior to being admitted. As a result, they lack motivation and the confidence to achieve

well. Staff address these issues by encouraging young people and praising their efforts to complete school work. Staff liaise well with education professionals, and have made particularly strong links with a local education provider. When young people are waiting for a school placement to be confirmed, staff arrange a full day educational activity programme within the home. Young people were observed to engage well with this programme.

A range of activities are provided, and one young person confirmed 'there is always plenty to do'. Many of the planned activities will include an educational element, or provide opportunities for young people to take exercise. Young people are given advice and guidance on adopting a healthy lifestyle, which includes practical experience of preparing a nutritional, balanced diet.

Staff encourage young people to develop their personal interests and hobbies. This contributes towards young people developing their own identity and increases self-esteem. Young people say they are treated with dignity and respect, and have their need for privacy upheld.

The home is well furnished and maintained, and provides a homely environment for young people. However, one young person expressed surprise that communal areas of the home, such as the lounge and kitchen, are locked at bedtime. The Registered Manager confirmed that this was normal practice. This restriction of access is not in place to protect young people coming to harm.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	**Requires improvement**

Some young people admitted to the home in recent months have demonstrated high levels of risk taking behaviour. This includes offending, anti-social behaviour and going missing. In some cases, the plans and strategies adopted to minimise these behaviours have not been effective. Some young people have placed themselves at risk of serious harm. Consequently, they have moved to more suitable accommodation, often at short notice.

Other young people have had a more positive experience, and have responded well to the boundaries and behavioural expectations established in the home. One young person has significantly reduced the frequency of going missing, and has acquired a better understanding of the risks associated with sexual exploitation. Despite residing in the home for only a short period, the young person is able to identify staff they could speak to regarding concerns and worries they may have.

Staff receive specific training on child sexual exploitation. This increases their knowledge and raises awareness of the risks facing young people. Staff spoken to during the inspection were able to describe the signs that might alert them to a young person being exploited. They were also able to explain how they have implemented their learning into their everyday work with young people.

There is a robust policy and procedure for responding to young people who go missing, which is understood and implemented by care staff. Despite this, there has been a high level of reported missing episodes in recent months. Many of these episodes can be attributed to one young person with complex mental health difficulties. The Registered Manager liaised well with the young person's placing authority and police missing person's co-ordinator to develop strategies for reducing the missing episodes, but without sustained success. This culminated in the young person's placement ending earlier than anticipated, when the Registered Manager concluded that the home could not keep the young person safe.

All missing episodes are well recorded, and document the efforts made by staff to locate missing young people and return them to the home. Records demonstrate that staff seek to engage young people in conversation about the risks associated with going missing or leaving the home without authorisation. Discussion takes place with placing authorities to identify the most appropriate person for undertaking return home interviews with young people.

All young people have missing from care risk assessments, which provide guidance to staff on appropriate responses. However, the general standard of risk assessments is not robust. In one case, no risk assessment had been undertaken regarding a young person's access to social media websites, despite this having been identified as a factor in him going missing, at a previous placement. Some risk assessments also lack detail and strategies for managing risk taking behaviours. Consequently, risk assessments are not always an effective tool for preventing young people coming to harm.

There was only one young person resident in the home at the time of this inspection. This young person reported that she generally feels safe in the home, although disruptive and aggressive behaviour from a resident at the provider's adjacent home, often had a negative impact. The young person felt this compromised their sense of security.

Some young people have received effective support in managing their behaviour, and have consequently made successful transitions from the home. However, in recent months, staff have not been able to consistently maintain the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Responses to anti-social behaviour have not been effective. This has had a negative impact on neighbours. Despite this, the behaviour management policy and associated individual strategies, have not been evaluated and amended to address the situation.

Occasionally, staff have had to use physical restraint to manage a young person's behaviour and prevent them harming themselves or others. Restraint is undertaken in accordance with regulatory guidelines, and is well recorded. Staff receive training in appropriate de-escalation and restraint techniques, to ensure practice is safe in this area.

Communication takes place with the Local Authority Designated Officer concerning any allegations made against staff, and this is recorded in detail. Internal investigations into such allegations are thorough, with appropriate support given to those involved.

Relevant staff receive training in safe recruitment practices, which seeks to ensure unsuitable adults are not employed. However, practice in this area is not sufficiently robust. There has been insufficient scrutiny of information relating to an employee's historic involvement in disciplinary procedures. Consequently, the provider has appointed staff without establishing the reasons for past performance related concerns.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	**Requires improvement**

The home has an experienced Registered Manager who holds the Diploma in Social Work qualification. In addition, there is a head of care who supervises a largely stable staff team, who have either obtained, or are working towards an appropriate qualification.

Established monitoring procedures review the quality of care being delivered. An independent visitor provides monthly reports with recommendations for addressing any shortfalls, which are then acted upon. Although the independent visitor attempts to gain the views of stakeholders, consultation with parents rarely takes place. Consequently, parent's views are not informing the monitoring process.

In recent months leaders and managers' have not effectively managed the admissions process. There has been a lack of analysis and evaluation of referral information provided by placing authorities. Consequently, young people with high level support needs and complex behavioural difficulties have been admitted. The needs of some young people have been beyond those defined in the home's statement of purpose.

This has occasionally had a negative impact on young people placed in both homes managed by the provider. It has also resulted in increased levels of anti-social behaviour in the local community and several incidents necessitating police intervention. As a result, neighbours have made complaints direct to the Registered Manager, and other relevant external agencies.

The Registered Manager has responded pro-actively, seeking dialogue with the neighbours and engaging with the police and district council community safety department. She has demonstrated a positive approach to mediation in an effort to resolve strained relationships within the local community. Leaders and managers acknowledge that the shortfall in admission procedures has had a negative impact on young people and local neighbours.

Young people who are appropriately placed at the home, are cared for in ways that address their needs, as defined in their care plans. When they do not achieve the anticipated level of progress, the Registered Manager ensures the placing authority, and other agencies, such as the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS), are engaged in discussion and review of the young person's plans. Positive working relationships are maintained with external professionals, and this often facilitates timely access to specialist support services for young people.

Staff generally feel well supported, although some feel that team morale has suffered as a result of the challenging situations they have had to manage following recent admissions. Staff receive regular supervision, which provides them with an opportunity to reflect on their practice. The Registered Manager receives supervision from a suitably qualified external consultant.

The organisation provides a range of training opportunities for staff, and ensures all staff regularly update their knowledge and skills in relation to child protection. However, there is currently no training provided on adolescent mental health.

Some young people have experienced significant trauma, which has had a negative impact on their emotional well-being and mental health. However, the lack of mental health training means that staff are not sufficiently skilled to meet the individual needs of these young people. Consultation does take place between staff and mental health professionals, which offers them some guidance on how to respond to young people's mental health difficulties. However, this does not compensate for the shortfall in the organisation's training programme.

Leaders and managers recognise that recent decisions taken in respect of new admissions have had a negative impact. They had identified some of the areas for improvement prior to the inspection taking place. The Registered Manager demonstrates a commitment to addressing the shortfalls in good practice, and has a positive attitude towards regulatory inspection.

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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