

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	11/01/2016
Unique reference number	SC405985
Type of inspection	Full
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	Hayley Roberts
Inspector	Natalie Burton

Inspection date	11/01/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Declined in effectiveness
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

SC405985

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- The lack of an educational daily routine for the young person does not support, aspire or sufficiently prepare young people to re-engage in their educational provision.
- The manager has failed to notify the appropriate authorities of all allegations made against staff.
- The manager has failed on occasion to notify Ofsted of significant events within the home.
- The staff have failed to consistently implement the home's policies. On occasions, they have not implemented strategies provided by the manager to keep young people safe. In addition, on occasion they have failed to ensure that the manager and subsequently other professionals, have all the required detail without delay to make informed decisions.
- On occasion the staff have failed to securely store medication, enabling a young person to access medication.
- The food provided to young people is to the young people's liking. However, it lacks to provide a nutritious diet over a period of time.
- The young person's records, lack detail, are not up to date and are of a poor standard. This fails to demonstrate the experience the young person has at the home on a day-to-day basis.

The children's home strengths

- The young person is cared within a nurturing environment, and receives individualised care.
- The young person feels safe in the home, and can identify staff to talk to.
- The young person is cared for by a dedicated and stable staff team
- The management have positive working relationships with external agencies. This benefits the support provided to the young person.
- The young person has made progress since their admission to the home. In particular with regard to significantly reducing their missing incidents, improving their self-esteem and engaging in activities.

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>8: The education standard</p> <p>In order to meet the education standard the registered person must ensure</p> <p>(2)(a) that staff</p> <p>(viii) help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. This is with particular regard to the daily routine of the home within educational time.</p>	29/01/2016
<p>12: The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered person must ensure-</p> <p>(2)(a) that staff</p> <p>(v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person.</p>	29/01/2016
<p>13: The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must enable, inspire and lead a culture in relation to the children's home that</p> <p>(1)(a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential.</p>	04/03/2016
<p>The registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16(5))</p>	04/03/2016

The registered person must ensure that medicines kept in the home are stored in a secure place so as to prevent any child from having unsupervised access to them. (Regulation 23(2)(a))	29/01/2016
The registered person must implement a policy which sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 34 (1)(b))	29/01/2016
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40(4) (c))	29/01/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure the staff encourage children to take a proactive role in looking after their day to day health and well-being. This is with particular regard to ensuring that children are provided with healthy and nutritious meals. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 34 paragraph 7.10)
- Ensure that the homes records on each child represent a significant contribution to their life history. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 62 paragraph 14.5)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned and managed by a private organisation. It provides care and accommodation for up to three young people of either gender who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/06/2015	Interim	Declined in Effectiveness
19/11/2014	Full	Adequate
02/10/2014	Full	Inadequate
18/03/2014	Interim	Satisfactory Progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
<p>The young person enjoys living in this home, and described it as 'cosy' and 'comforting'. The young person was welcoming, polite and was proud and keen to show their home. The young person reported they feel safe, listened to and contributes to the running and development of the home. They are treated with respect, and have their individuality facilitated and celebrated. This is because the staff actively seek the young person's views both formally, through key work sessions and house meetings, and informally through daily conversation. The young person recognises the progress they have made since living at the home, and this has helped to build their confidence and self-esteem. They have good relationships with all staff, developed through regular key work sessions, and conversations. In particular the young person, reported they had very good relationships with their keyworker and the manager. This enables the young person to have an adult they can talk to when they are worried about something.</p> <p>The young person makes sufficient progress in most aspects of their lives. Such as, developing social skills, reducing risk taking behaviours and are becoming aware of how their choices and actions impact upon them. They develop mature responses to anger, frustration and disappointment, and increasingly express their feelings in a more positive manner. This is because a committed, stable and encouraging staff team, care for them, whose knowledge of the young person's vulnerabilities and needs is sufficient. The young person was able to talk about how they recognise that measures are in place to protect them and keep them safe.</p> <p>Communication processes are effective. The close working relationships between placing authorities, police, families and other key professionals support the young person and develop their placement. All agencies and family members consulted were positive about the liaison between themselves and staff. A professional reported that their relationship with the staff and managers was always good.</p> <p>The young person enjoys good and improved health. This is because staff encourage them to understand and take responsibility for their own health needs. The staff ensure the young person attends their appointments with their doctor, dentist and optician. They take robust action to concerns of young people potentially smoking at the home, through room searches, and active prevention to young people accessing cigarettes. The young person enjoys meals that meet her likes and dislikes. However, menus fail to demonstrate that the young person has a varied and nutritious diet. This is because there is a lack of vegetables and variety to the food eaten. The staff support the young person to take part in purposeful physical activities. This includes, going to trampoline centres, going for a walk and</p>	

swimming. Currently the young person's access to local community clubs is limited as part of the young person's care plan to ensure that they are kept safe. In general medication arrangements are safe. However, on occasion staff failed to safely secure medication, enabling a young person to obtain the medication. While the manager took immediate and robust action to address the situation, through room search and discussion with the staff and young people; this does not ensure the medication is consistently securely stored.

The young person's plans are effectively implemented and closely monitored. The assessment of their placement contributes to the overall level of care provided.

The young person is not attending school, and has no educational provision. This is due to the quick transition into the home, following a previous placement breakdown. In addition, despite requests from the manager, a significant delay in the response from the placing authority to identify a suitable educational placement, and provide the home with educational resources, has impacted on the young person's education. However, while the staff are supporting the young person to access some education each day; this is limited, and fails to sufficiently ensure that the young person is prepared for when an educational provision is identified. This does not ensure that the staff fully support young people to aspire to reach their potential.

The young person has maintained relationships with important and appropriate people in their life. They benefit from appropriate contact with their family members. The staff properly support and facilitate the young person's individual arrangements. The young person is adequately preparing for their transition to independence and adult life. They are developing their levels of independence according to their age and ability, and in line with their current risk assessments. The young person receives basic support in areas such as, budgeting, cooking and self-care skills. During the inspection the young person demonstrated their skills through budgeting their allowance, and cooking meals with staff.

The staff and managers have made improvements to the environment of the home, to ensure that young people live in a homely and welcoming place. The young person's bedroom is personalised with pictures and posters and is individualised to their liking.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
<p>The young person said they feel safe at the home. Staff are informed of safeguarding policies and procedures through inductions and training. A recent allegation has been reported appropriately and in line with the home's safeguarding policy to ensure that the young person is safeguarded. However, on occasion allegations made by previous young people living at the home, have failed to be reported to the appropriate authorities. In addition, on occasion staff have failed to promptly inform the manager of all details of the allegation in a timely manner. This has failed to ensure that the Local Authority Designated Officer has all the required information to make an informed decision. While there is minimal impact on the current young person, this does not ensure that all young people that have lived at the home are consistently safeguarded.</p> <p>Some young people who lived at the home, were at risk of going missing. While the staff were active in seeking these young people, the outcome from these incidents resulted in some unplanned and not so positive endings. The manager has reflected on these incidents, and been proactive to prevent further recurrences. Such as, meeting with the local police lead for missing young people, and ensuring that the home's policy is in line with the local police protocol. The home's locality risk assessment and awareness of potential areas of concern that can enable young people to go missing, such as local transport systems have been considered. The manager has developed new strategies to ensure that staff actions support young people to be safe through this knowledge. The current young person, who has high risk of absconding of child sexual exploitation, and a history of placing themselves at significant risk, has not gone missing from the home, since admission. This is because the staff are knowledgeable, and implement clear strategies to keep the young person safe.</p> <p>The young person is supported to take increasing responsibility for their own behaviour given their age. This is because the staff provide the young person with clear and appropriate boundaries and structures. They successfully utilise positive approaches to help the young person reflect on and change their behaviour. The use of physical intervention within the home is minimal, and only used when appropriate. The young person has individualised targets that staff review weekly. Such as, keep their bedroom tidier, and settle well at bedtime. The young person is clear on these expectations and feels that the home is managed fairly in this area. Therefore, the young person's improves their behaviour.</p> <p>The young person has detailed risk assessments. These include lone working risk assessments, activities they partake in and identified areas of concern. In addition, the manager has implemented clear assessments and strategies to further safeguard the young persons' access to the internet and social media sites. This further ensures the young person is kept safe in line with her care plan.</p>	

The staff received training related to countering bullying and the home has a written policy for the prevention of bullying. On occasion previous young people reported to incidents of bullying. The staff were sufficient in their response through providing sufficient levels of supervision. The current young person placed, has no concerns regarding bullying.

The young people are protected by robust recruitment checks that ensure staff are carefully selected and vetted to prevent unsuitable people working in the home. Visitors sign in and are chaperoned while in the home. Health and safety checks are up to date and young people placed at the home participate in practice fire drills. This helps prepare young people and keep them physically safe.

The home is safe and secure. Following a recent incident within the home, where young people previously placed at the home, accessed the pool car keys and drove the car without staff knowledge; the organisation has taken robust action. This is because the organisation has installed a door alarm system, new guidance regarding the storage of keys, and a robust system to check the premises and young people at night.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
<p>Since the last inspection, the organisation has appointed a manager, who has been in registered with Ofsted in July 2015. The manager has over eight years' experience of working with children and young people, and holds a Level 5 Diploma and Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare. The young person and staff spoke positively about the support from the manager.</p> <p>The home's statement of purpose provides information about the ethos and objectives of the home. However, due to the shortfalls identified within this report, the statement of purpose is not consistently implemented into the home. The young person confirmed that they had received a children's guide on their admission to the home, providing information of the care they should receive and of useful information.</p> <p>The manager has made significant improvement to the service since the last inspection, in areas such as, providing the young person with a homely environment. Reflection on incidents that have previously placed young people at risk, and implementing strategies to prevent recurrences to serious concerns. In addition the manager has improved her working relationships with other agencies, to develop good working relationships with the virtual head teacher, the Local</p>	

Authority Designated Officer and the police. The manager is aware of the shortfalls identified within the report, and is keen to further the improvements already made to improve the quality of care to young people.

The manager has met the five requirements and one recommendation set at the last inspection. The home's missing policy details the steps the staff can take to prevent a young person from missing, and when missing. The organisation has ensured staff have received training in child sexual exploitation and understanding young people's behaviour. To support this the manager discusses their learning in more detail in team meetings. As a result, the staff are now skilled to support young people when presenting with challenging behaviour, and are more knowledgeable to de-escalate confrontation. This benefits young people, as staff manage young people's behaviour rather than involving the police. The organisation and staff have made improvements to the home. A new carpet has been fitted in the hallway, and general poorly maintained décor and furnishings have been replaced; providing young people with a well maintained homely environment.

The manager has improved the monitoring within the home, through the action taken to address the shortfalls identified. In addition, the manager's internal monitoring details areas of progress of young people, and the action required to improve their quality of care. The organisation has taken robust action, when staff have previously failed to sufficiently safeguard young people. For some staff this has resulted in an improvement in the care they provide as they have reflected on practice, and been supported by managers in their role.

The staff attend regular staff meetings and supervisions to ensure that their practice improves further and the focus remains on the young people's needs and development. As a result, young people's progress is noted by young people themselves, their families and staff.

The staff while lacking in some experience are motivated by their enjoyment of working with young people and watching them progress. There is always enough staff on duty to provide safe care and enables staff plenty of opportunities to spend quality time with the young people. The manager is very accessible to the staff and young people, and provide a good level of support.

The young person benefits from sufficient management. There are various systems to monitor the quality of care they receive. These include monthly and quarterly monitoring, analysis of date, feedback from young people, and the homes development plan, all look to improve the service further. External monitoring visits take place on a monthly basis, and provides feedback to the home with details of shortfalls and areas of improvement.

The young person's records are stored securely. However, while some records, are concise and clear; other records, such as the young person's daily records, are of a

poor standard, and fails to consistently and robustly capture the experience of the young person within the home. The safety and welfare of the young person is not affected, as this is a shortfall in staff knowledge of records rather than practice.

The manager has informed the necessary professionals and agencies of some significant events, and records demonstrate clear actions that are taken and the reflective learning from an event. However, this is not consistent. Therefore, this fails to ensure that the appropriate and prompt action is consistently taken.

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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