

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	08/03/2016
Unique reference number	SC462809
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	Francis Williams
Inspector	Jo Henderson

Inspection date	08/03/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained 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

SC462809

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- The interior of the property is not decorated or maintained to a high enough standard to provide a homely environment.
- Communal rooms are locked during the daytime and late evening. Rooms have also been locked as a sanction.
- Care plans are not sufficiently personalised and do not contain targets specific to individual young people.
- Risk assessments are not comprehensive or sufficiently personalised. Some key areas of risk have not been highlighted.
- Staff have accepted placements where insufficient information is available to assess whether they are able to respond effectively to the young person's needs.
- Staff have not notified Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) of a significant incident when a young person went missing from their care.
- Complaints are not always recognised as such and as a consequence are not logged, investigated and reported on.
- Confidential case records are not always stored securely.
- Poor staff performance is not always addressed in a timely manner.
- The registered manager's quality of care review does not state what actions will be taken to improve any identified shortfalls.

The children's home strengths

- Young people have access to a wide range of activities and pastimes.
- Staff are good at accessing opportunities for young people within the wider community.
- Some educational provision has been organised while an appropriate full-time alternative is sought.
- Staff are creative in supplementing education by providing opportunities to learn in other environments.
- Young people's views are sought about their care through regular house meetings.
- Young people are enabled to contribute to review and planning meetings.
- Young people's care plans detail what is important to them.
- Young people are enabled to have good-quality contact with important family members.
- Staff see themselves as a team working together in the best interests of young people.

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>6: The quality and purpose of care standard</p> <p>In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard the registered person must ensure:</p> <p>(6)(2)(c)(i) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child. This is with particular regard to the communal bathrooms, bedrooms, lounge and kitchen.</p>	05/04/2016
<p>6: The quality and purpose of care standard</p> <p>In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard the registered person must ensure:</p> <p>(6)(2)(iv) that staff provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background.</p>	05/04/2016
<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) (i) That staff assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plan, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child.</p>	05/04/2016
<p>The registered person must ensure that children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home premises (Regulation 21 (b))</p>	05/04/2016

The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious and must include full details of the matter (Regulation 40 (4) (e) (5) (a) (i))	05/04/2016
The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation (Regulation 39 (3))	05/04/2016
The registered person must ensure that case records are kept in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home (Regulation 36)(2)(d))	05/04/2016
After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review (Regulation 45 (3))	05/04/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that placements are only accepted for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- Ensure that poor performance is addressed by implementing a timely plan to bring about improvement. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61 paragraph 13.5)

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 three young people, irrespective of gender, who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/08/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
06/01/2015	Full	Adequate
14/05/2014	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
21/01/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
<p>Young people's placement care plans are not sufficiently individualised. There are no clear and specific targets set and outcomes are generic. Plans do not show that the staff know the young people well, either acknowledging specific areas of strength or identifying areas for development. A parent spoken to said that she thought that the home had effected some positive change for her daughter, but care plans do not currently record this in any detail. As such, it is difficult to measure and therefore evidence any improvements the young people achieve from their unique starting points.</p> <p>A system is in place to record and celebrate small achievements that the young people make daily, but this contains very little information. Therefore, there is scant evidence that the young people experience positive reinforcement when they do well. This has the potential to negatively impact on their self-esteem.</p> <p>The home environment is not well maintained and most rooms are in need of some redecoration. Several ceiling tiles are damaged and marked and one area of the landing ceiling has what appears to be visible food stains. The kitchen floor is broken and in need of replacement. A radiator in the lounge is rusting in places. Rooms did not look or smell clean and fresh. Most surfaces were marked and skirting boards were particularly dirty. One bedroom, not occupied for several weeks, had an unemptied rubbish bin containing food left in there. In addition, a confidential document belonging to the last occupant of the bedroom was found discarded on the bed. It appeared that no-one had been in or checked the empty bedroom since the young person had left. The home does not provide a warm and welcoming environment, or provide the young people with the physical necessities that they need in order to live there comfortably.</p> <p>Some communal rooms are regularly locked, denying the current young person access during the school day and after bedtime in the evening. Staff say that this is to encourage the young person to engage with education and to settle at night. Rooms appear to be locked as a matter of course. This does not provide a homely environment and is restricting the young person's liberty in an attempt to make her comply as opposed to working with her to change her behaviour and to adopt good routines.</p> <p>Staff say that they enjoy positive relationships with the young people and are committed to providing them with a good experience of care. Interactions observed between the staff and the current young person appeared warm and</p>	

positive and the young person seemed comfortable and happy in their company. However, when spoken to, the young person said that she did not feel communication between her and the staff was good.

The young person currently living in the home is accessing some educational provision onsite. This is a part-time curriculum aimed at covering all basic subjects. She is attending regularly and accessing supplementary opportunities through working with the staff both in the home and in the community. A social worker spoken to said that the staff are proactive in accessing opportunities that young people will both enjoy and benefit from. She said that a forthcoming trip to the Science Museum is a result of a young person expressing a particular interest in space. Young people are encouraged and enabled to access a wide range of interests and activities within the community and there is a busy schedule of weekly activities. This enables young people to develop interests and social relationships outside of the home environment.

Young people's meetings are held regularly and minutes are recorded. There is also evidence on young people's files that their views are sought and reflected in care planning meetings and reviews.

Regular and structured contact is arranged in advance to enable the young people to maintain relationships with important family and friends. Young people's views and requests are considered and due regard is given to what and who is important to them.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
<p>Risk assessments lack detail in relation to specific concerns about individual young people. Prior consideration was not given to the likelihood of a young person going missing as it was considered that they were unlikely to do so. When an incident did occur, staff amended their assessment. However, the update provided little practical information about how the risk could be better managed in the future. A parent said that it was her view that, 'Risk assessments do not fully account for some of the challenges that X has presented to date.'</p> <p>In general, the staff do not appear to understand the risk of young people going missing. A young person recently placed at the home as an emergency was identified as being at significant risk of absconding. Staff agreed to the placement despite the fact that it was very likely that the young person would go missing again if given the opportunity. He left the home after one night and was not reported missing until many hours later. Similarly, staff did not notify Ofsted that</p>	

this vulnerable young person was missing until nine days after he had left. This does not demonstrate a robust and proactive response to managing and reducing the likelihood of young people going missing from care. Neither does it demonstrate that placements are only accepted for young people where staff are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to their needs.

Young people have behaviour management plans in place that are regularly updated. Staff identify young people's specific behaviours, triggers are highlighted and strategies suggested to diffuse situations. Some sanctions used have involved restricting a young person's liberty. For example, following an incident involving hot liquids, the identified sanction was that the kitchen would be locked for a period of time. Although any immediate risk of a further incident was reduced, this does not demonstrate staff working with the young people to enable them to better manage their impulses and behaviours.

There have are no incidents recorded since the last inspection that have required physical intervention.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
<p>The registered manager has been in post since 2013 and holds a relevant level 5 diploma in leadership in health and social care. He leads a team of ten permanent, appropriately qualified and experienced members of staff. Recruitment records evidence that thorough checks have been undertaken to ensure that those employed are suitable to work with vulnerable young people.</p> <p>Staff receive regular supervision which is recorded and they have access to appropriate training and opportunities for professional development. Records indicate that where poor performance has been highlighted and additional training identified, this has not always taken place in a timely manner. This does not evidence a consistent approach to improving practice and driving up standards.</p> <p>The manager undertakes monthly reporting of the service, and within these reports identifies progress made and highlights any shortfalls. However, subsequent actions taken to improve the quality of care are not clear. For example, a recent report highlights a parent raising some concerns about the staff's practice. This was not documented as a complaint and there is nothing recorded to show how this matter was addressed. This does not demonstrate robust action to address issues of concern when they are raised. Similarly, concerns raised by a young person were also not recorded or responded to as a complaint.</p>	

Some social workers said that they enjoyed positive working relationships with the staff and managers at the home and communication was of a reasonable standard. However, others said that communication was not good enough and this was a significant factor in a young person recently going missing. A parent spoken to said that while she received weekly reports on daily routines and progress, she was of the view that important information was not always shared.

The manager is aware that there are areas of the care offered that require improvement and expressed his disappointment at some of the identified shortfalls. He said that he and the staff group remain very committed to the young people. He is of the view that the young people do make progress through the care and support that they receive from the staff in the home. He said that he knows that some areas of the home require attention and that plans are underway for the home to be redecorated and refurbished in places. He is confident that this will improve the experience of care for the 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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300123 4234, or email 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.

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, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at 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
W: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016