

Children's homes inspection – Full

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| Inspection date | 10 May 2016 |
| Unique reference number | 1224093 |
| Type of inspection | Full |
| Provision subtype | Children's home |
| Registered manager | Post vacant |
| Inspector | Jane Partridge |

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| Inspection date | 10 May 2016 |
| 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 | Good |
| The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers | Requires improvement |

1224093

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- The home requires improvements both inside and outside to provide children with a valued environment and one that meets their needs.
- Some young people reported that staff were not available to them, and this affected their ability to form trusting relationships with them.
- Childcare plans lack clarity.
- Some staff have not received professional supervision in line with organisational policy.
- Leaders and managers have not sought the views of significant others, nor monitored and reviewed the service effectively to ensure that continuous improvements are made to the quality of care provided in the home.
- The independent visitor has not specifically assessed the safeguarding and well-being of children in placement.
- Staff have not completed training to enhance their knowledge about meeting the specific needs of the children in placement. Some staff have not completed the diploma in residential childcare within required timescales.
- A shortfall of the service is that it does not provide or record the nutritional content of the food consumed by young people with specific health needs.

The children's home strengths

- Children are significantly safer because of living in this home.
- The academic achievement of children has significantly improved because of living in this home.
- The stable and committed staff team wants to make a difference to the lives of children.

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 persons meet 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 persons must comply within the given timescales.

| Requirement | Due date |
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| In order to complete a quality of care review, the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care provided for children. The system referred to must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff (Regulation 45(2)(a)(5)). | 10 August 2016 |
| The independent person must produce a report about a visit, which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded and whether the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being (Regulation 44(4)(a)(b)). | 10 June 2016 |
| 6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, the registered person must ensure that (2)(c)(i) the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child. | 10 August 2016 |
| 11: The positive relationships standard In order to meet the positive relationships standard, the registered person must ensure that staff (2)(a)(viii) strive to gain each child's respect and trust. | 10 August 2016 |
| 13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must ensure that (2)(c) staff have the skills to meet the needs of each child. In particular they must undertake training to gain specific knowledge to meet the individual needs of young people in placement, with specific regard to engaging young people, drug and alcohol awareness and missing from care. | 10 August 2016 |
| The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-based supervision in line with organisation policy (Regulation 33(4)(b)). | 10 June 2016 |

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| The registered person must ensure that an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification, the level 3 diploma for residential childcare, by the relevant date. The relevant date is, in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls two years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home (Regulation 32(4)(a) and (5)(a)). | 10 November 2016 |
| 6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, the registered person must ensure that staff (2)(b)(ii)(iv) protect and promote each child's welfare and provide personal care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plan. | 10 July 2016 |

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that staff seek to meet the child's needs in a way that a good parent would, recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where these needs have not been consistently met. Doing so is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care for the child and value them as an individuals ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 15, paragraph 14.3).
- Ensure that young people are provided with nutritious meals and that a clear record is kept of food consumed ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 15, paragraph 3.8).

Full report

Information about this children's home

A private company owns and operates this children's home. It is registered to offer care and accommodation for four children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

This is the first inspection.

Inspection Judgements

| | Judgement grade |
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| The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are | Requires improvement |
| <p>Children and staff lived in another property before collectively moving to this new home. Children reported, 'This is a much better place. It's in a town and there are more things to do.' Children have benefitted from its central location as access to local activities and amenities are within close proximity.</p> <p>Although a recently refurbished home, externally the presentation is poor. Garden waste is piled high, broken wooden borders, car mats strewn across the flowerbeds and a general lack of garden maintenance do not offer a welcoming, cared-for environment. Inside, the ground floor living spaces presented as clean, welcoming and homely. These offer a comfortable space for children. Bedrooms, however, also presented in a poor state. Varying degrees of cleanliness and hygiene and unkempt bedding do not offer children a cosy, relaxing space to enjoy and in which to sleep. Children in care are likely to have experienced environments where their needs were consistently unmet. In delivering a consistently good, nurturing home environment, staff would demonstrate that they care for the child and value them as individuals.</p> <p>For over twelve months, no children have either joined or left the home. The children placed experience familiarity and consistency within the group. The staff team has also been stable, with few changes. There are sufficient numbers of staff employed to care for the children, yet some children reported that they experienced staff not being available to them. They said that they feel that staff are negative towards them and that they are not listened to and are unable to establish trusting relationships. A parent also commented, 'My child does not get emotional support from staff.' The manager has recently developed a practice guide which emphasises the importance of staff's availability to children, and further training in engaging children is likely to support staff to consider how best to establish meaningful relationships with them.</p> <p>A significant strength of the home is the positive promotion of the children's education, and the support offered to them in terms of this. Children access both mainstream provisions and the organisation's linked school, which offers individual, bespoke educational packages. Most children had been out of school for considerable periods prior to placement. Currently, all are positively engaged, and attendance is up to 100% for some. One child, who has missed large chunks of schooling, said, 'It is really important for me to get my GCSEs!' Children are making significant progress with their academic achievements, which considerably enhances their future options and improves self-esteem.</p> | |

An individual health plan sets out the specific needs of each child. This ensures that they maintain good general health and includes the usual regular check-ups. Some children placed have particular medical conditions requiring increased use of bathroom facilities. This significantly affects the availability for other children, and some choose to wait for home contact to bathe. The acceleration of the home's plan for the installation of a second bathroom will ensure adequate facilities to meet the needs of all children in placement. One child has health conditions that require a specific diet. However, recording does not evidence that staff are assisting the child to improve his health condition.

All relevant plans are up to date, with children's contributions included. In one instance, the care plan for long-term care was not reflected in discussion between the staff and the child. This does not promote the child's welfare, nor does it promote trusting positive relationships between children and staff. A particular strength is the contributions that children make to their behaviour management plan. These help children to consider the issues that cause them distress and ways in which these feelings are managed. This helps children to begin to recognise their own behaviours and assists in self-regulation. Children are able to recognise the differences that they have achieved in their behaviour while living in the home. As a therapeutic resource, the staff receive support from a clinical team. Team members give specific input and strategies to assist staff in helping the young people to manage their feelings and behaviours and to attain good mental health.

The team supports young people with their family contact. Team members have an open and inclusive relationship with children from which they facilitate direct contact in line with the placement plan. This ensures that family ties are sustained and strengthened.

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| | Judgement grade |
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | Good |
| Children are safe and become increasingly safe as a result of living in this home. There has been a significant reduction or a complete stopping of risky behaviours that the children initially presented. Missing from care incidents have drastically reduced and no longer feature in children's behaviour. Children placed who were at risk of harm through child sexual exploitation have also become safer. They actively seek safety through staff intervention should a rare incident now occur. Staff work effectively and efficiently with police and the safeguarding agencies to ensure the protection of children. | |

Children recognise their past risky behaviours. One stated, 'I don't want to be that person anymore.' They agreed that the home offers a safe place in which to live.

Staff recognise and support children's cultural needs. However, following some worrying behaviour and comments, staff were concerned about the possible radicalisation of one child. Working with the wider professional team ensured that services to support religious and political views are safely in place.

Individual risk assessments hold appropriate information to ensure the effective management of any potential risk. Updates occur as incidents happen in order that staff work with the most current information and that children remain safe. Staff are knowledgeable about the statutory agencies, policy and process and their individual responsibilities in safeguarding children.

Physical intervention has also reduced and, when it does occur, a gentle guiding away helps to diffuse the situation. Children receive space and time in which to discuss the event and to assure staff of their well-being.

Children are learning to self-regulate and to develop self-control. Measures in place ensure that they are safeguarded and that their welfare is promoted.

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| | Judgement grade |
| The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers | Requires improvement |
| <p>The home's registered manager recently retired and appropriate interim arrangements are in place. The home's deputy manager has successfully moved into the acting position. She is currently engaged in the home's manager registration process. Staff speak positively about this transition. It also continues to offer children consistency and familiarity with the management of the home.</p> <p>Staff coming into the service are subject to robust recruitment and vetting procedures. This ensures that only suitable people are working with children in the home. The organisation sets out its arrangements for staff supervision. Staff speak positively about the supervision that they receive. They appreciate the space that it offers in which to consider and reflect safely on their performance. There is a shortfall in practice as not all supervisions for staff on probation meet the organisational timeline. For staff entering residential care work, timely supervision is essential. It offers space to help them to reflect on the possible impact of this highly complex work on themselves and their practice, and is a key factor in staff retention.</p> <p>The staff team is committed to making a difference to children's lives, helping</p> | |

them to achieve and to enjoy their successes.

All staff have completed mandatory organisational training. While most eligible staff have the professional level 3 diploma for residential childcare, one achieved this significantly outside the required timescale. The manager has set a plan for this to be completed. Staff care for children with a range of pre-care experiences that significantly affect their well-being. These often present staff with a range of challenges to manage. Undertaking specific training relating to these experiences is likely to support staff to understand and consider how best to meet their needs.

The acting manager is aware of some of the strengths and areas for development for the service. The quality of care is monitored in a timely manner, but ascertaining and considering the opinions of parents, placing authorities or staff is not taking place as part of this process. The service provides opportunities to gain the views of children. However, these also appear to be overlooked during this process. The omission of service users' views and the views of the team around the children do not provide a robust review of the quality of care delivered. An analytical review of the information is also absent. This results in no robust plan for the continuous improvement of the service delivered to children. The independent visitor contributes to service improvement with their monthly audit and review of practice and process. Their report, however, does not include their assessment of how well the home is safeguarding nor how it promotes children's well-being.

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 children looked after 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 that 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 whom 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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