

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	24 May 2016
Unique reference number	SC403789
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Beverly Cyrus
Inspector	Dave Carrigan

Inspection date	24 May 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	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

SC403789

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Managers have yet to maximise their joint working arrangements with all agencies to improve practice that safeguards young people.
- Managers are slow in realising the opportunities of working closely with the police to make more efficient use of their knowledge in helping to protect young people.
- Managers do not challenge weaknesses in staff recording which leaves missed opportunities to learn from incidents.
- Staff do not coordinate their efforts to ensure young people are offered an independent return interview after a missing from care episode.
- The manager's monitoring system does not help him to get to know the difference the home is making to improving young people's lives.
- The independent visitor's monitoring is not sufficiently challenging to drive forward improve.
- Managers do not ensure young people have access to a children's guide that tells them about what they can expect from the staff.
- Young people have few opportunities to contribute positively to the running of the home.
- Managers do not swiftly implement improvements when repairs are required.

The children's home's strengths

- The manager provides staff with ongoing support, supervision and specialised training that reflects young people's needs.
- Staff place a much higher value on young people's education since the last inspection, making sure their support results in learning success.
- Staff are creative in helping young people to learn skills that help to prepare them for their future.
- Nurturing relationships and a stable environment helps young people to thrive physically, emotionally and socially.

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>7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard</p> <p>In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, the registered person must ensure that children receive care from staff who –</p> <p>2(b) ensure that each child –</p> <p>(i) is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support and services that the child receives to include independent return interviews;</p> <p>(ii) has access to the home's children's guide, when the child's placement in the home is agreed and throughout the child's stay in the home</p>	15 July 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>(d) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health</p>	15 July 2016
<p>The registered person must –</p> <p>(b) have regard to any relevant local authority or police protocols on missing children (Regulation 34(5)(b)).</p>	15 July 2016
<p>The registered person must ensure –</p> <p>(a) that within 24 hours of the use of the measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is</p>	15 July 2016

<p>made which includes –</p> <p>(iii) the date, time and location of the use of the measure;</p> <p>(iv) a description of the measure and its duration, details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;</p> <p>(vii) the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure (Regulation 35 (a)(iii)(iv)).</p>	
<p>The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child that –</p> <p>(a) include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>Information relating to the care, protection or safety of the child</p> <p>14. The date and circumstances of all incidents where a child goes missing from the home, including any information relating to the child's whereabouts during the period of absence (Regulation 36 (1)(a) (Schedule 14)).</p>	15 July 2016

Recommendations

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

- Involve the local authority and other relevant persons to work in partnership whenever there are concerns about a child's welfare. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 42, paragraph 9.4).
- Ensure that there is independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under Regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or mental disorders. The home is operated by a private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29 March 2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
24 November 2015	Full	Good
30 March 2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
08 December 2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Requires improvement
<p>At the last interim inspection, the home was judged as declined in effectiveness. Although the manager has begun to address the shortfalls from the inspection, they are still in their infancy so their impact has not yet begun to take full effect.</p> <p>One young person is not receiving all the support she needs. This is because not all partner agencies work together to agree a co-ordinated strategy to keep her safe. The manager has been slow to address the conflicting advice between the police and the placing authority. The continuous shift in focus between the different agencies means the manager has not been able to pull together a preventive strategy to which all parties agree.</p> <p>Consulting young people on matters such as menu planning and activities is not routinely occurring. For example, one young person prefers vegetarian food. However, staff have not taken into account her views and opinions when planning menus. This leaves her with a limited choice on what to eat at meal times.</p> <p>Staff place more focus on encouraging and enhancing young people's education since the last inspection. Staff give practical and emotional support to help young people who have difficulties with school attendance. This support is tailored to young people's needs, taking into account both their attainment, and progress in relation to their individual starting points. Consequently, young people are now beginning to succeed in their learning and development.</p> <p>Staff work hard to sustain a nurturing relationship with young people. This helps young people to feel confident about their relationships with staff and supports their progress. For example, one young person was observed preparing a meal with support from a member of staff.</p> <p>Professionals make positive comments about the way that young people are looked after. For example, one social worker reports, 'It is my professional view that the care [child's name] has received since being placed at the home has been of a good standard'.</p> <p>Young people have personalised care and risk management plans that staff keep under review. These plans take account of the full range of their needs and identify their daily support requirements.</p> <p>Staff ensure that young people have access to all the necessary health services.</p>	

For example, staff have formed good links with the local child and adolescent mental health service. The registered provider's own therapists then work in partnership with these specialist services to ensure young people's specific emotional health needs are met.

The manager ensures the home operates an effective medication policy. This helps staff to be clear over their responsibilities to safeguard young people by making certain they receive medication in accordance with their doctor's instructions. These measures help young people stay healthy.

Staff help young people to maintain contact with their family and friends. Staff will facilitate contact, for example, by providing transport so that these important connections are maintained. These measures mean young people receive every encouragement to keep in contact with their family.

Young people are helped to prepare for adulthood by acquiring the life skills they need. For example, staff encourage young people to learn skills through taking part in tasks such as cooking and shopping.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
<p>Staff recognise circumstances that may compromise young people's safety and welfare. However, these efforts fall short of sustaining meaningful joint working. This shortfall extends to not having a strategic approach agreed between the staff, the police and the placing authority on how to keep a young person, assessed as at high risk in the community, safe. For example, staff do not routinely follow the local missing from care protocol and the young person's missing from care trigger plan. Although staff report their concerns at regular multi-agency safeguarding meetings, they do not challenge the conflicting advice they receive. This means that, despite staff attempts to keep a young person safe when she goes missing from care, risks remain that have the potential to compromise her safety and well-being. Other young people in the home do not go missing and instead work with staff to make safer decisions that help to keep them safe from harm.</p> <p>After missing from care incidents, staff do not complete any evaluation of the young person's behaviour to examine trends or patterns. The staff also do not ensure the young person receives an independent return interview. This hinders staff in being able to reflect and learn from incidents to inform future practice that helps to keep the young person safe.</p>	

Staff use their positive relationships with young people to encourage acceptable behaviour. This, in turn, helps to keep the use of physical restraint to a low level. However, the manager does not ensure records always capture the details that lead up to an incident. This absence of detail denies staff and the young people the opportunity to reflect and learn from situations, especially where young people have struggled to control their emotions.

Staff complete regular health and safety checks and follow a range of safety procedures to protect young people from potential hazards. These include fire drills to ensure that young people know what to do in the case of an emergency. Some unrepaired damage to the home requires attention. This includes a hole in a bedroom door and the need to replace furniture in a young person's bedroom. This failure to address repairs swiftly means young people are not encouraged to be proud of their home.

Young people are protected by the organisation's robust recruitment practices. Staff are vetted and assessed as suitable before any appointment is made. These procedures promote the safety of the young people by preventing unsuitable adults from working with them.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
<p>An appropriately qualified registered manager is in place. The manager has been in post since October 2009 and holds a national vocational qualification in leadership, health and social care at level 4.</p> <p>An independent visitor calls at the home once a month in line with legislation to monitor and report on the quality of care. The independent visitor's monitoring reports lack scrutiny and analysis and do not demonstrate that the quality of care is subject to robust monitoring. For example, the independent visitor has failed to identify the lack of appropriate paperwork relating to the monitoring of the quality of care. This failure does not ensure that there are fully effective systems in place to monitor the quality of care and does not support the home's development.</p> <p>The manager and staff promote and develop effective partnerships with some agencies, in particular, social workers, health professionals and parents. However, the home continues to work separately from the police rather than in partnership. The manager has not encouraged a multi-agency approach that means one young person is not receiving all the protection they need. Little</p>	

thought and understanding is given to resolving the difference in opinions in dealing with a young person's presenting risks. This has resulted in services working against each other rather than working together. This slow response to managing this situation means one young person is able to place herself at potential risk of harm in the community.

Staff are well supported through regular supervision, annual appraisal and training. The manager places a high priority on making sure staff stay up to date with information about professional practice. This focus on practice helps staff to target their work in helping young people to be equipped with the skills, confidence and self-esteem to progress successfully in their placement. For example, staff have attended training that is pertinent to the needs of the young people who are in placement; this includes mental health, first aid and internet safety.

All the staff have either a minimum of a qualification at level 3 in residential childcare or are imminently due to complete their course within regulatory timescales. This helps to ensure staff have the competency to match their role and responsibility to care for young people.

The manager has not ensured that new young people have access to a children's guide. This means that young people do not know what to expect and what to do if they are unhappy about any aspect of their care.

The manager keeps the statement of purpose up to date; this sets out the vision, values and aims of the service. This, in turn, helps placing authorities, parents and other interested parties to have a clear understanding of what they can expect from the service.

The manager has met two of the requirements and recommendations arising from the last inspection. Young people are now much more engaging in their education and there is a clearer system for capturing specific information after an incident. Staff are now familiar with how to respond to safeguarding incidents, along with notifying the appropriate agencies. The recommendation of ensuring that young people receiving an independent return home interview has not been met and has now been raised to a requirement.

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 that 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 records, 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 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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