

## Children's homes inspection – Full

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>15 June 2016</b>
<b>Unique reference number</b>	<b>1183574</b>
<b>Type of inspection</b>	<b>Full</b>
<b>Provision subtype</b>	<b>Children's home</b>
<b>Registered provider</b>	<b>Cheshire West and Chester Council</b>
<b>Registered provider's address</b>	<b>58 Nicholas Street, Chester, CH1 2NP</b>
<b>Responsible individual</b>	<b>Sophie Wales</b>
<b>Registered manager</b>	<b>Gillian Owen</b>
<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Michelle Edge</b>

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>15 June 2016</b>
<b>Previous inspection judgement</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>This inspection</b>	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and/or their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.	
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>

**1183574**

## **Summary of findings**

### **The children's home provision is inadequate because:**

- Young people's needs are not being met across aspects of their welfare and development, in particular their safety and emotional well-being.
- Poor recording fails to provide a factual record of young people's care experience.
- Care plans and risk assessments are not robust or effectively reviewed to address the changing needs of the young people.
- Staffing is not sufficiently stable to provide consistent care to young people.
- Management review and evaluation of the home's records are insufficient. This hinders improvements in how staff understand and respond to young people's needs and behaviour.
- Staff are not sufficiently qualified, skilled or competent to meet the needs of young people.
- Staff do not recognise or respond to potential or actual safeguarding concerns within the required timescales.
- Young people have access to full-time education provisions. However, there are no education plans in place and some staff did not have a clear understanding of young people's needs, their current exam timetable, predicted grades or their academic levels.
- Young people are at significant risk of child sexual exploitation and no strategies are in place to support the young people in this area.
- Safer recruitment procedures have not been adhered to and fail to safeguard the young person and minimise any potential risks to them.
- Senior managers have not made suitable arrangements for the day-to-day running of the home, in the absence of the registered manager.

### **The children's home strengths**

- Young people benefit from staff support that encourages positive contact with family members and those significant in their lives.
- Staff support young people to try new leisure 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 within 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.—(1) that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>(a) understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>(b) use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>(a) understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>(b) ensure that staff—</p> <p>(i) understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>(ii) protect and promote each child's welfare;</p> <p>(iii) treat each child with dignity and respect;</p> <p>(iv) 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>	<p>22 July 2016</p>
<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>(i) help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>(iii) understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers;</p> <p>(x) help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans.</p>	<p>22 July 2016</p>

<p>10: The health and well-being standard</p> <p>In order to meet the health and well-being standard the registered person must ensure-</p> <p>(1) (a) the health and well-being needs of children are met;  (b) children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the registered person must ensure—</p> <p>(a)(i) that staff help each child to achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans.</p>	<p>22 July 2016</p>
<p>12: The protection of children standard.</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to ensuring that staff take action to protect children when they consider them to be at risk of child sexual exploitation, the registered person must ensure that staff—</p> <p>(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;  (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;  (v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;  (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and  (vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies;  (b) that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm;  (e) that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly.</p>	<p>22 July 2016</p>
<p>13: The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must ensure -</p> <p>(1) that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p>	<p>22 July 2016</p>

<p>(a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; (b) ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; (f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home 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; (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p>	
<p>14: The care planning standard</p> <p>In order to meet the care planning standard the registered person must ensure that children-</p> <p>(1) (a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and (b) have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (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; (c) that each child's relevant plans are followed.</p>	22 July 2016
<p>The registered person must keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b)).</p>	22 July 2016
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home; if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that the individual is of</p>	22 July 2016

<p>integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2 (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(a)(b)(d)).</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)(c)).</p>	22 July 2016
<p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ('the behaviour management policy') which sets out how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (2)).</p>	22 July 2016
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)).</p>	22 July 2016

## Recommendations

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

- Promote the development of safe, stable and secure relationships with staff that are central to the ethos of the home and support the development of secure attachments that, where appropriate, persist over time. In particular, take steps to strengthen staff skill in supporting and influencing children ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.11).
- Ensure that clear arrangements are in place to maintain effective management when the manager is absent, off duty or on leave ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20).
- Ensure that just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of the home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Limits on privacy and access may only be put in place to safeguard each child in the home (Regulation 21 (c)(i)). Any

decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home and any modifications to the environment of the home, must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. In particular, with reference to downstairs rooms being locked to prevent young people accessing them ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10).



## **Full report**

### **Information about this children's home**

This is a local authority home for four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

### **Recent inspection history**

This is the first inspection since registration.

## Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
<p><b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b></p>	<p><b>Inadequate</b></p>
<p>This is the first inspection since the home opened in November 2015.</p> <p>Young people live in a home that has suffered a period of instability. Several changes in staff since registration have led to inconsistent care and young people's individual needs not being met. One young person said, 'I ask one staff member and they say yes, but then the next says no. It's not fair. I don't think they (staff) know the right answer.' The lack of staff working permanently in the home has disrupted the stability and consistency of care provided to young people. In addition, frequent changes in staffing have further impacted upon young people's opportunities to develop warm and trusting relationships with the adults caring for them. During the inspection, staff within the team acknowledged that the number of changes had impacted on everyone. Staff members also said 'we have all being doing things differently, it's confusing for us, never mind young people' and 'we have not really had a team, it has been a very difficult and chaotic few months'.</p> <p>Compatibility risk assessments and plans for young people moving into the home are of a poor quality. Significant information, including historical concerns, are not detailed in all assessments. The plans lack any evaluation of the risks posed or the guidance to staff on how to manage them in a safe way. For example, when risks including going missing from care, smoking and violence in the home were identified as of significant concern there is no further information about how these risks will be managed for both the individual young person, other young people in the group or staff. This has resulted in young people being inappropriately placed and their needs and welfare have not been fully protected.</p> <p>Young people have access to full-time education provisions and staff have supported them to maintain their current school provision, transporting one young person a significant distance daily. However, some staff did not have a clear understanding of young people's needs, their current exam timetable, predicted grades or their academic levels. The home did not have any education plans in place and young people did not benefit from a clear structure or routine to support their attendance and learning. This was specifically evident for young people who refused to attend their education setting. It was observed during inspection, that young people remained in bed until late afternoon and staff showed no clear expectations around their attendance. Consequently, staff do not demonstrate high aspirations for young people's learning and are not preparing and supporting young people to re-engage with their education.</p> <p>Staff are unable to support the emotional and psychological health of young people. Staff lack the knowledge and training necessary to enable young people to</p>	

make positive changes through effective engagement. Health plans contained conflicting information and did not clearly identify young people’s health needs and any other services available to support them. For example, one young person’s plan noted that they required ‘a high calorific diet’. However, there was no evidence that this was in place. During discussions with the registered manager, she clarified that this was no longer required, but accepted that none of the health plans within the home were updated to include new medical advice. This failed to provide all new and relief staff with the required information to meet the needs of the young person. There were also further examples of records indicating that young people had refused to attend planned medical appointments. There was no further information to show what action was taken, or what strategies are used by staff to address health requirements. This fails to promote young people’s physical and emotional well-being.

The home presents as homely and welcoming, domestic in both size and scale. However, contrary to the home’s statement of purpose, which indicates that children will have access to all communal areas of the home, some areas have been restricted for staff use only, including the downstairs toilet. Not only is this a breach of the home’s own statement of purpose, it also restricts young people’s access to all communal areas of their home.

Young people are supported to spend time with their families. Positive contact helps them to identify with extended family members and spend time in their own community. This helps young people to build a picture of their family background. Feedback from parents and family members was positive about the support made available to young people during contact, including staff taking and collecting them from planned contact sessions.

Staff are encouraging young people to try new activities. They obtained leisure passes for the local sports facilities and encourage young people to attend. They have also arranged trips to the local snooker hall and accessed information on a local football team, requested by a young person. This supports young people’s social development.

	Judgement grade
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
<p>The children’s home has suffered a very unsettled period. The impact of inconsistent care provided by changing staff, together with young people moving into the home who did not match positively with those already living there, has impacted on the safety and well-being of young people.</p> <p>Despite most young people saying that they feel safe in the home, it was evident that young people, and staff, are at times placed at risk, from their own and other young people’s aggressive behaviours. For example, assaults on staff have led to</p>	

some young people being arrested and charged. Additionally, staff have felt it necessary to request police assistance to manage behaviours, because they did not have the skills to manage the situations effectively. Not only does this undermine a safe home environment, it places young people at risk of being criminalised.

Although a range of risk assessments were in place, these lacked any detail or clarity about the risks posed to young people. They also did not provide strategies for staff to be able to minimise risks identified. There was no evidence that individual risk assessments or placement plans were updated following all significant incidents. Subsequently, there was no consistency or continuity of care planning in place for young people. For example, despite child sexual exploitation and unsafe mobile phone usage being identified as a high risk for young people living in the home, their individual risk assessments did not sufficiently assess these risks. Additionally, staff have not received training on these specific safeguarding issues and when spoken to during the inspection, demonstrated a limited knowledge and understanding of such matters and how to address them to keep young people safe. For example, some staff could not identify basic indicators of child sexual exploitation and what action they would take if concerns arose. Consequently, shortfalls in risk assessments and safeguarding training is impacting on staff's ability to identify, act upon and teach young people how to keep themselves safe.

Following a safeguarding incident, when it became evident that a young person had left the home to meet an unknown male, staff failed to take immediate action or to follow their own safeguarding policies and procedures. As a result, there was no swift response to a potential serious safeguarding situation. This failed to ensure the young person's safety and welfare.

Furthermore, not all restraints are carried out within the home's own policies and procedures. Neither have all staff had restraint training. This has led to some restraints being inappropriate. Following an occasion when a young person alleged that they had sustained an injury during an unsafe restraint, staff failed to take appropriate action. Safeguarding professionals, including Ofsted, were not notified of the event within the required timescales and all relevant paperwork was not completed. This demonstrates that staff do not work consistently within the home's safeguarding policies and procedures, which in turn prevents a swift investigation by the relevant professionals to protect young people.

Young people do not always benefit from clear and consistent boundaries or effective behaviour management strategies. Staff do not consistently record all disciplinary measures used to manage young people's behaviours. Additionally, some records do not provide a clear overview of the behaviour that led to such measures or the young person's views. Consequently, this places young people at risk of poor behaviour management practices. The delays in incidents being monitored means that there is no analysis or evaluation of the interventions used to determine whether staff practices and behaviour management strategies adequately safeguard young people and help to improve the quality of care.

The lack of planned, targeted key work sessions with young people has meant that

their present and emerging emotional needs are unmet. Staff have failed to ensure that targeted work following all significant events is undertaken. This includes when young people have gone missing from the home, displayed behaviours that are challenging or have accessed inappropriate materials on computer-enabled devices. This shortfall means that staff are missing an opportunity to identify and address the risks posed to young people both in the home, online and in their local community.

Despite young people being identified at risk while using the internet, staff were not vigilant and have not received any formal training. There were also several 18-rated computer games observed in a young person's bedroom. When brought to the attention of staff they reported that they had not seen these before, but also questioned why the young person could not have access to them. This does not demonstrate that staff fully understand their safeguarding roles and responsibilities, neither are they helping young people to understand how to stay safe online.

There have been organisational failings in the recruitment and selection of staff. On occasions, two references were not always requested, gaps in employment were not identified and police checks were not obtained prior to staff starting work in the home. Application forms also did not always contain the staff members work history. This does not ensure that the recruitment of staff safeguards young people and minimises potential risks to them.

	Judgement grade
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
<p>The registered manager has the required national qualifications to undertake this role. However, over the last few months she has only spent limited time at the home due to her own personal circumstances. Although the provider looked at alternative management strategies, these were ineffective and this has impacted on the day-to-day management arrangements. There have been further failings in management oversight and monitoring of the home, to identify areas of weakness and to take decisive action to resolve these. As a result, young people's progress and safety has been compromised. Staff members said 'it has been very difficult without a manager here', 'we were not sure who to go to when we needed more advice' and 'the lack of management and all the changes in staff and young people has made our role difficult'.</p> <p>Since the registered manager has returned to work, she had already identified some of the concerns raised as part of this inspection. She had devised a plan to begin to address the failings within the home and had started to review some of the records, including behaviour management, sanctions and restraints. She has also taken action to address the shortfalls identified by the independent visitor and</p>	

updated Ofsted on notifications that were not provided in a timely way.

Staff spoken to during the inspection said that the manager is 'very supportive', 'helpful' and 'willing to get involved in day-to-day tasks'. However, the inspection identified that formal supervision has not taken place at regular intervals for both permanent and new staff in their probation period. Induction processes have also not been followed, such as regular meetings arranged to review their progress and address any areas of concern. Therefore, opportunities have been missed to develop new staff, review their practice and ensure that they are promoting better outcomes for young people.

Staff are not all sufficiently trained, to develop the skills, knowledge and expertise relevant to the needs of the young people that they are working with. For example, not all staff had been provided with training in safeguarding and e-safety and were unclear on the factors that need to be considered when working with young people at risk. This does not ensure that young people are cared for safely and appropriately by staff who understand and recognise indicators of when young people are at risk.

Care planning is poor and does not promote the continued progress of young people. Internal placement plans and risk management plans are not reviewed effectively to identify the changing needs of individual young people. They also fail to address the issues of risk and how these should be managed safely to promote consistency of care. Records do not provide an insight into the young people's lives and care experiences and there is limited information to measure their progress or identify the effectiveness of the support provided.

The registered manager fully acknowledges all shortfalls raised at this inspection. She recognises how her absence and the lack of suitable management arrangements have impacted on the day-to-day running of the home and the outcomes for young people. She shows capacity and enthusiasm to make all the required improvements, including training and supervision for all staff and more robust systems to ensure that young people's safety and well-being are prioritised.

## 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 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 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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