

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	2/08/2016
Unique reference number	1212094
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Hexagon Care Services Limited
Registered provider address	1 Tustin Court, Riversway, Preston PR2 2YQ

Responsible individual	Louise Whitby
Registered manager	Vacant
Inspector	Elaine Clare

Inspection date	2/08/2016
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	Inadequate
There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean that children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

1212094

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is inadequate because:

- Young people are not safe because the actions taken by staff to support and protect them are not consistent or effective.
- Behaviour management strategies, including the use of sanctions, are inconsistent and fail to address unacceptable behaviour. Young people do not therefore benefit from clear behaviour management strategies.
- Risks identified on referral are not being minimised. Young people remain at high risk of being sexually exploited while missing from the home for long periods of time.
- Risk management is poor. Assessments are not routinely updated and staff do not sign to say that they have seen and understood the risk-taking behaviours of young people.
- There is little progress in the attendance or attainment of most young people in education. This significantly reduces their chances to succeed later in adult life.
- Young people use illicit substances, and the home has failed to provide additional services to support the young people to reduce and stop.
- The home does not have a full staff complement and there have been significant changes in the management of the home. This results in staff from an agency frequently covering shifts at the home and a new management team recently starting employment. Consequently, young people experience inconsistencies in their day-to-day lives and fail to develop trusting and stable relationships with staff.

The children's home strengths

- Young people are encouraged to develop independent skills, and, when shortfalls are identified, the programme is quickly adapted to better suit the needs of the individual.
- Young people are involved in the complex decisions in life. There are talked with about the choices that they are making and asked to reflect on what they are doing and why, in order to find solutions for a better outcome.
- Discriminating behaviour is challenged, and bullying is not tolerated. Discussion in young people's meetings and key-work sessions corroborated this.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that 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
<p>5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met</p> <p>The registered person must, and must ensure that staff</p> <p>(c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans.</p>	01/09/2016
<p>6: The quality and purpose of care standard</p> <p>(2)(b) The registered person must ensure that staff</p> <p>(iii) treat each child with dignity and respect.</p>	01/09/2016
<p>8: The education standard</p> <p>(2)(a) The registered person must ensure that staff</p> <p>(x) help each child to attend education and training in accordance with the expectations in the child's education plan and the home's care plan.</p>	01/09/2016
<p>10: The health and well-being standard</p> <p>With particular reference to specialist substance misuse services, the registered person must ensure that staff enable</p> <p>(1)(b) children to receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being and</p> <p>(c) children to be helped to lead healthy lifestyles.</p>	01/09/2016
<p>11: The positive relationships standard</p>	01/09/2016

<p>2(a) The registered person must ensure that staff (x) are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same.</p>	
<p>12: The protection of children standard 2(b) The registered person must ensure that the day-to-day care is arranged and delivered through effective care planning and risk management, so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm.</p>	01/09/2016
<p>12: The protection of children standard 2(c) The registered person must ensure 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>	01/09/2016
<p>36: Children's case records 1(b)(c) The registered person must ensure that case records, including risk assessments and care plans, are kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry.</p>	01/09/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that children are in full-time education while they are of compulsory school age, unless their personal education plan contained within the care plan or other relevant plan states otherwise. The home must aim to support full-time attendance unless the child's relevant plan indicates that this is not in their best interests. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.14)
- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. When there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps that the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39,

paragraph 9.5)

- The use of agency or bank staff should be carefully monitored and reviewed. Rapid turnover of staff, whether agency or directly employed, is likely to indicate underlying problems and should be monitored and addressed by the registered person. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 10.12)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to accommodate up to four children, irrespective of gender, aged 10 to 17 years old. The home specialises in the care of children who present with emotional and/or behavioural problems. It is operated by a private organisation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
N/A		

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Inadequate</p>
<p>This is the home's first inspection since registration in February 2016. The registered manager has resigned from her position, and a new manager has been employed. She commenced in her post in July 2016.</p> <p>The management of behaviour by staff is inconsistent. One young person stated, 'This place is not good because staff allow us to do what we like.' Young people have an individual behaviour management plan, and staff are provided with specific guidance on individual methods of managing behaviour. However, staff are not consistently following this guidance and, as a result, young people's behaviour continues to be very challenging. This is reflected in the incident records and daily observation sheets that include smoking cannabis around the home, serious assaults on staff and criminal damage to vehicles. This inconsistent approach fails to enable young people to understand their own behaviour in order to address it and to make essential changes beneficial to their future.</p> <p>One young person was identified at referral to be at significant risk of child sexual exploitation when missing from care. She has shown no improvement while living in the home. Her missing episodes have not reduced, and the home has been unable to keep her safe. During the inspection, she was reported missing and her whereabouts are currently unknown. When she was last reported missing, she did not return for 14 days. There is a significant risk to her personal safety and that of other younger people whom she may be associated with. The manager of the home has failed to formally challenge the local authority about the lack of strategy to manage the missing from care episodes for this young person, or the lack of information provided at the point of referral. As a result, opportunities to improve her next care experience have been missed.</p> <p>The manager and staff have been encouraging young people to attend police sessions to raise their awareness of the legal consequences of possessing cannabis. However, appointments with specialist health professionals have not been made. All young people smoke, and there appears to have been little effort by staff to discourage this. For example, during a tour of the property, socks were found covering the smoke alarms in the young people's bedrooms. This had been brought up at the staff meeting a month previously but, as a result of a failure to put in daily room checks, the practice continued. Another example is young people taking drugs while in the home or returning to the home, following a period of unauthorised absence, under the influence of illicit drugs. The consequence of supervised spends has not been adhered to or shortened and, with no further follow-up work, the young people have bought the substances again.</p>	

One young person is engaged with an apprenticeship. This is a stable learning environment and, as a result, she is achieving in her chosen career. For other young people, school attendance is generally very poor. One young person had one-to-one tutoring in the home. The tutor attended for two days before stating, '[Name] is not the slightest bit interested in English culture or the language and did her utmost to resist being taught and said almost anything I tried to teach her was irrelevant and boring.' Following the resignation of the tutor, a new provision has failed to be identified, and there is currently no education in place for her.

The future is uncertain for another young person, and she is unclear where her next education provision will be. She has been told by her local authority that she is moving back to her home area in June or, at the latest, July. The young person was very frustrated to be living in the home in August and not have a plan of where she will be living or what college she will be attending. The staff and manager were very vocal to her about the inconsistent messages she was receiving from the local authority but had not challenged the local authority formally about their concerns. This fails to ensure that the young person's needs are being fully met in accordance with the child's relevant plans.

Young people have the opportunity to participate in a range of activities and clubs but often refuse to engage with staff's suggestions, preferring to socialise with their peers in the local community. These periods of 'free time' away from the home can last up to three hours. It is positive that young people have the freedom to make and sustain friendships outside of the care setting, but it is unclear what the young people are doing, as they are generally unsupervised during these periods.

Care planning arrangements are good but are not regularly updated to reflect the current situation in the home. Young people who are placed have a residential care plan, behaviour management plan and healthcare plan. Plans are not routinely updated, and changes, including long-term arrangements and revised risk analyses, are not completed.

Young people routinely have one-to-one sessions to address the aims of the placement and behaviours or areas for concern. Consequently, there is a clear structure to assist young people to make changes in their lives and to help them to achieve their placement objectives. However, this is not always complied with by the young people.

There are inconsistencies in the staff team due to the regular use of agency workers who regularly cover shifts in the home. Three staff members have left the home in the time the home has opened. One staff member walked out after her shift, stating that she would not return. Consequently, young people fail to make strong and trusting relationships with staff, which impacts on their emotional resilience and ability to form positive attachments. The registered manager has also recently left the home and the young people vocalised strongly that they miss her and that the home is not the same now that she has gone.

During the inspection visit, it was a young person's birthday. Banners had been left

up from a previous young person's birthday and some balloons had been pinned up. However, she received no individual gifts from staff and, though she had received a house present, there was no celebration in place. The young person commented that this was her 'worst birthday ever'. This fails to respect and provide dignity to young people and shows a lack of organisation by the staff team to put a meaningful celebration in place.

Young people are supported to keep in appropriate contact with their families. Some of the young people live a long way from home, and there are serious risks for them back in their home areas. As a result, contact is generally carefully planned and supervised closely.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
<p>Young people have not been adequately safeguarded. Although some of the young people are clearly engaging in less risky behaviour than they were previously, there are still a number of shortfalls that are not acceptable. In several instances, risks have not been well identified by staff.</p> <p>The home is not settled and young people could not confirm that they feel safe. One young person spoke about an incident in which she felt that agency staff had handled her inappropriately, she spoke about feeling unsafe and that she had asked staff to call the police.</p> <p>There have been a number of safeguarding concerns prior to the inspection, which have not been thoroughly investigated by managers. For example, when an allegation was made by a young person, the investigation did not commence in a prompt and efficient manner. There was some confusion, and the manager referred the case to the local authority designated officer for the wrong authority. This left the young person feeling vulnerable and vocalising strongly that she had been harmed and that staff were doing nothing about it. As a result, it compounded the young people's views that staff do not care and weakened any trusting relationship being developed.</p> <p>Risk assessments have been put in place to enable staff to understand how to support the young people whom they care for. However, these are not regularly updated by the manager and key workers. As a result, they are not understood by regular and agency staff, and this fails to keep young people and staff protected.</p> <p>Consistency of practice at times between members of the staff team is weak. For</p>	

example, young people are not allowed to go out on free time together. However, during the inspection visit, young people were seen getting into a taxi together paid for by the staff from the home. This demonstrates that the management of behaviour at the home is sometimes inconsistent and, as a result, young people receive mixed messages.

Staff supervision of the young people in the home has been poor. An older male from the community has been able to enter the home and a bedroom of a young person on two separate occasions. Staff were unable to enter the young person's room as it had been barricaded. However, other young people verified that he was in the room and that the young person was asking for the other young people to assist her in getting him out. This is a very serious breach of security at the home and placed all the residents at risk of harm or being exploited. Young people have been able to bring drugs and alcohol into the house and party until the early hours of the morning in the home. Staff have failed to implement the clear boundaries consistently put in place by the manager to address this.

On occasion, staff hold or restrain a young person to prevent them from hurting themselves or others. The occasions when holding or restraint is used in this manner are fully recorded. When possible, staff discuss the reasons for the restraint with the young person concerned and try to help them understand why it has been necessary and, within the limits of their capabilities, help them to learn more appropriate ways of dealing with anxiety or distress.

The home is damaged and there have been significant incidents in the home that have led to holes in the walls, a damaged television and the company car windscreen smashed. A mirror in a young person's rooms has recently been smashed and one of the shards has been used as a weapon against the manager. During the inspection visit, the company maintenance team arrived to repair some of the damage. However, this did not prevent a young person from hurting her hand on damaged property, and this had to be treated and bandaged in the home.

Relevant health and safety checks are in place, and equipment is regularly maintained. When necessary, it is serviced or replaced. Staff are trained in fire safety and explain to the young people what they should do if the fire alarm sounds. Staff, children and young people understand what to do in an emergency situation and how to evacuate the building in the event of a fire.

	Judgement grade
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<p>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</p>	<p>Inadequate</p>
<p>The registered manager resigned in July 2016. Since this time, a manager has been recruited to the home. An application has not been received by Ofsted for her to become the registered manager, as she is waiting for documents to be returned before she can submit the application. The applicant is returning to the position of manager, following a period away from the role, but has experience of being a registered manager previously. She has her national vocational qualification level 4 and her diploma level 5 in leadership and management.</p> <p>The home has a clear statement of purpose, which is regularly reviewed to ensure that full and accurate information is available to parents and placing authorities. The home provides each young person with an informative guide, which details the service offered and telephone numbers for young people to contact for support and advice. This ensures that young people are clear about the care and service provided.</p> <p>Young people are cared for by staff who bring a variety of skills and experience to the service. However, staff do not receive regular supervision, and this fails to give them an opportunity to reflect on the current situation being experienced in the home. The staff benefit from a range of training opportunities that equip them to fulfil their roles. The staff rota shows the deployment of sufficient staffing, although there are daily shortfalls and agency staff have been used to meet the staffing needs. Some key staff members have left the home, and there are development areas identified for the remaining personnel.</p> <p>The home has a development plan in place. The management team and staff understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. One staff member said, 'We want the home to do better. We're having a difficult time at present and some things have had to be postponed. Staff are tied up with other things, like dealing with some young people's unpredictable behaviour.'</p> <p>The registered provider has appointed an independent regulation 44 visitor who undertakes regular visits to the home and reports on their findings. This means that the quality of care and welfare of young people is adequately monitored. Reports are sent to Ofsted in a timely manner and reflect accurately the current situation in the home. Consequently, the regulator has the opportunity to assess how well the home is responding to issues that may be identified, in order to improve the service. Despite this process the provider was not aware of the shortfalls identified at this inspection.</p> <p>The management team promotes and embraces feedback, including issues arising from independent and internal monitoring processes. However, new ideas and emerging practice are not yet embedded throughout the managerial and staffing culture.</p>	

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 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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