

## Children's home inspection – Full

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>13/10/2016</b>
<b>Unique reference number</b>	<b>1227335</b>
<b>Type of inspection</b>	<b>Full</b>
<b>Provision subtype</b>	<b>Children's home</b>
<b>Registered provider</b>	<b>Exceptional Care Ltd</b>
<b>Registered provider address</b>	<b>Unit 16, North Mersey Business Centre Woodward Road Knowsley Industrial Park Liverpool L33 7UY</b>

<b>Responsible individual</b>	<b>Nicola Molloy</b>
<b>Registered manager</b>	<b>Vacant</b>
<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Lisa Mulcahy</b>

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>13/10/2016</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</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
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.	
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>

**1227335**

## **Summary of findings**

### **The children's home provision requires improvement because:**

- Some of the records in the home are variable in quality and provide inaccurate or incomplete information. They do not always provide a comprehensive picture of young people's views, experiences and progress that contributes to a fuller understanding of their lives, needs and the support they require.
- Young people who are frequently missing from home do not always receive independent return interviews in line with statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care.
- Not all young people attend full-time education, and their engagement with a part-time tutor is variable. The home does not always promote or meet the educational needs of young people.
- Professional relationships with partner agencies need to be developed in order to ensure that young people receive specialist support and intervention specifically in relation to being missing from home, substance misuse and child sexual exploitation.
- The home does not have a workforce plan that clearly details the training completed by staff, their ongoing training and continuing professional development needs. Not all staff members have completed mandatory training, including safeguarding training. This has potential implications on how well they are able to safeguard young people.
- The home's location risk assessment does not identify all known risks within the community or how risks will be managed. This does not ensure that young people are safeguarded or suitably placed at the home
- The staff team is diverse, and some staff are more experienced than others. Although regular team meetings take place, the staff team members need to build relationships with each other in order to ensure that they have a consistent approach in meeting the needs of young people.

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

- Young people have good, trusting and supportive relationships with staff and are able to talk to them if they are worried or concerned.
- Young people live in a well maintained home that is furnished and decorated to a good standard and provides a welcoming environment. Young people have personalised their own bedrooms. This encourages a sense of belonging for young people and shows them that they are valued.
- Staff have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a young person is at risk of harm. This has resulted in young people being safeguarded and perpetrators being arrested to prevent further risk of harm.
- Staff take appropriate action to establish the whereabouts of young people when they are missing from the home, to ensure their safe return.
- Staff understand the importance of regular contact between young people and their family and fully support them in maintaining this. They have built positive relationships with family members. They make contact arrangements and supervise contact when necessary.
- Young people are fully prepared and supported when moving on from the home, to ensure a smooth transition.
- The interim manager has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and how he intends to make the required improvements.

## 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>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>	16/12/2016
<p>The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child, ensure they are kept up to date and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p>	16/12/2016

### Recommendations

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

- The registered person should have a workforce plan that can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should: detail the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training (such as safeguarding, health and safety and mandatory qualifications.) The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff – including the home's manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

- 'Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care' sets out the steps local authorities and their partners should take to prevent children from going missing and to protect them when they go missing. Children's homes should have regard to the relevant aspects of this guidance. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.25)
  
- Registered persons have a key role in seeking to develop the home's effective working relationships with each child's placing authority and with other relevant persons which may include services, individuals (including parents), agencies, organisations and youth offending teams (regulation 5 – engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met). These working relationships will also be key to success in delivering the care planning standard (regulation 14). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.3)

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

This privately run home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

### Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
First inspection post-registration		

## Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<p>Young people enjoy positive, caring and nurturing relationships with staff. Staff enjoy spending time with young people, for example going shopping, and cooking in the home, which was observed during the inspection. A staff member said: 'I love working at the home. Most of all, I love working with the young people.' Young people feel listened to, and their wishes and feelings are acted upon when possible. For example, a young person who regularly goes missing from the home has spoken to staff about wanting to live nearer to his family and friends, as he says this would stop him from going missing. This information has been shared with the placing authority, who have now identified a placement closer to his family and friends.</p> <p>The educational arrangements for one young person are not good. The interim manager at the home has failed to challenge the placing authority and education providers to ensure that appropriate education provision is in place. The home does not ensure that the young person benefits from a routine and structure that supports engagement in education. As a result, the educational attendance and needs of young people are not always met. In another example, prior to living at the home one young person had 98% attendance with education and this has significantly reduced since living at the home.</p> <p>Young people are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle. For example, staff encourage them to choose healthy meal options. They are supported to attend health and development appointments, including dental checks and statutory children looked after health assessments. However, healthcare plans do not identify all health and developmental needs and how these will be met. For example, the substance misuse of a young person is not included in the healthcare plan. Therefore, the health and development needs of the young person are not being fully addressed.</p> <p>Young people are encouraged and supported to maintain regular contact with family members. The interim manager and staff at the home are proactive in ensuring that contact arrangements are appropriate, and ensure that contact is safe, productive and enjoyable for young people. Staff have developed positive relationships with family members and, when necessary, they supervise contact. The interim manager has challenged a placing authority when contact arrangements have appeared to be inappropriate and have not been in line with the young person's views, wishes and feelings.</p> <p>The views, wishes and feelings of young people are sought through key-work</p>	



sessions, young people's meetings and everyday conversations with staff. These views are clearly taken into account and shared with relevant people to ensure that appropriate plans are made for young people about their care. For example, appropriate advice, support and intervention have been provided to young people in key-work sessions, which have included topics such as sexual health, contact, and the relationship between the two young people in the home. A young person said, 'Staff listen to me and always do what is best for me.'

The home is welcoming and decorated to a good standard. Young people have access to all shared areas in the home and get involved in the day-to-day chores in the home, including keeping their bedrooms tidy. Young people's rooms were exceptionally tidy and were personalised with personal belongings, photographs and posters. One young person who was not feeling well during the inspection was tucked up on the sofa with a blanket, watching television. The lovely home environment for young people makes them feel comfortable and valued.

The home has good systems in place to prepare and support young people who are moving on from the home. The interim manager and staff liaise with placing authorities and new placement providers to ensure a smooth transition from the home. For example, young people were supported to visit their new home and meet with the staff to ensure that this was where they wanted to live. The interim manager also ensures that necessary information is shared so that the new providers have the full detailed information about the young person to enable them to plan for a smooth transition. Both young people spoke positively about the support they were getting from the interim manager and staff to prepare them for moving on.

	Judgement grade
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<p>Young people feel safe in the home because staff do whatever is needed to keep them safe. The staff team is able to identify safeguarding concerns and respond appropriately to address them to ensure that young people are safeguarded. A staff member said: 'I am proud that I was able to respond to two significant safeguarding incidents for a young person that resulted in the perpetrators being arrested and the young person being safeguarded.'</p> <p>The staff have a good understanding of the risks to young people that are associated with going missing from care, and they make every effort to locate young people and ensure that they return home as soon as possible. Key-work sessions are completed with young people following missing-from-care episodes to discuss the risks and reasons for the missing-from-care episodes. However, they</p>	

are not proactive in ensuring that young people receive an independent return interview in line with statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care. Therefore, this does not allow information to be uncovered that can help protect young people from going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing, or from potential risk factors in their home.

Behaviour management in the home is good. Young people know what is expected of them and they have clear and fair boundaries that help them know what is safe and acceptable, and how they will be looked after by staff. Negative behaviour displayed by young people is addressed using a restorative approach. This approach encourages young people to reflect on any concerning or risky behaviours and to take responsibility for their actions, while gaining an understanding of the impact of their behaviours on others. For example, following a disagreement between young people in the home, staff spoke with each of them about their behaviour and put a plan in place for them to have a mediation session. Although the young people did not engage in this, the approach did appear to resolve the disagreement.

As the home has only been open for a few months, relationships with local safeguarding professionals need to be developed further. The home has not proactively engaged fully with local support and safeguarding networks to address some of the issues that the young people have faced, particularly in relation to being missing from care, substance misuse and child sexual exploitation. However, more recently there is evidence that attempts are being made to seek advice, guidance and support from these professionals and to build positive professional relationships with them. For example, contact has been made with local substance misuse, child sexual exploitation and missing-from-care professionals. This needs to continue to ensure that young people are safeguarded and that they receive the most appropriate support to reduce risk. In addition, this will provide staff with specialist advice and guidance so that they can ensure that young people are safeguarded in their care.

Some of the records in the home relating to safeguarding do not truly reflect the risks to young people and how these will be managed. Consultation with young people in relation to this is also not evident, and not all records are clearly signed and dated by staff. This includes information in risk assessments, incident logs and healthcare plans. These inaccurate or incomplete records may compromise the safeguarding of young people.

The health and safety practices in the home are good. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure that the premises are safe and that young people are able to respond in an emergency. Medication is stored securely and records are clear and accurate. Not all staff are trained in this area but this has not impacted on young people's safety and well-being. Health and safety practices in the home ensure that young people's safety and well-being remains paramount.

There is a review of the home's location in place, but it does not address all known risks in the community, for example the children's home that is located a very short distance away, shops and public houses, or the lack of footpaths on main roads. The information in the location risk assessment is not evaluative to outline the impact that this would have on young people being placed in the home or on the young people currently living at the home.

	Judgement grade
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<p>The home is currently being managed by an interim manager, due to the previous registered manager leaving his post unexpectedly after only being in post for a short period of time. The interim manager was the deputy manager of the home and therefore is familiar with the home's ethos, aims and objectives as outlined in the statement of purpose. His application with Ofsted to become the registered manager is underway.</p> <p>The interim manager has extensive experience of working in residential childcare and has worked for the company for a couple of years in its sister homes as a deputy manager. He has a diploma level 3 qualification children and young people but does not have the relevant management qualification. However, he is now enrolled to complete this qualification. He is aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses and is keen to make improvements. He has a clear vision for the future of the home and is supported by the company's management team to achieve this.</p> <p>Relationships between young people, the interim manager and staff are good. The needs of young people are clearly understood by the interim manager and staff. They do well in providing young people with a safe and motivational environment where there are good levels of care and support. Young people are provided with positive experiences in the home. However, the progress that young people have made to date is limited. The interim manager and staff are committed and motivated to improve in this particular area by engaging with the wider system and improving the quality of records.</p> <p>The monitoring and review systems in the home need to be developed in order to review the quality of care provided and outcomes for young people. To date there is no internal monitoring in the home. This has contributed to shortfalls in relation to the quality of records in the home, supervision and staff training. The home has systems in place for external monitoring to take place each month, and this has identified strengths and weaknesses that have been well responded to by the</p>	

interim manager. In order for the quality assurance of the home to be effective, regular internal and external monitoring must take place. This will support the interim manager in making improvements that will have a positive impact on the home, staff and young people.

Staff are well supported by the interim manager, and since he has been in post regular reflective supervision has taken place. However, the records for these need to be signed by both the manager and staff member to confirm it is a true reflection of the supervision session.

The staff team is diverse, and some staff are more experienced than others. Not all staff have received mandatory training. This is a priority for the interim manager as he wants his staff team to be fully trained in order for them to provide a good standard of care to the young people and to keep them safe. The staff team needs to build relationships to enable staff members to offer a clear, consistent level of care to the young people. The staff need to reflect together on their practice and the impact this has on young people in order for them to establish a clear way of working that will benefit the young people. Staff rotas often mean that the staff members work with the same member of staff each time, and this does not allow them to get to know and to share positive practice across the team. However, this is shared at some handover meetings, and team meetings take place monthly at which good practice examples are shared.

Professional relationships between the home, social workers, independent reviewing officers, and the youth offending team are good. They share appropriate information with these professionals regularly to ensure that the appropriate support is in place to meet young people's identified needs. However, this good practice needs to be developed with a wider range of professionals to ensure a consistent approach in supporting young people in all areas of their development. A social worker said: 'I can only say positive things about the home. The level of communication is really good with me and other professionals. Young people have good relationships with staff.'

The home is operating in accordance with its statement of purpose, which clearly outlines the ethos and philosophy of the home: 'All children and young people placed in the home will experience a safe, supportive and caring "home from home" environment that is conducive to their welfare and stage of development.' Young people are provided with a young person's guide handbook that provides them with information relating to how they will be cared for when living at the home and how they can make a complaint about the care provided to them.

## 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 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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