

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	15/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC423453
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Wood Grove (Childcare) Ltd
Registered provider address	c/o Kedleston Group Limited, Office Suite No 1, Ansell Gardens, Holloway Lane, Harmondsworth, Middlesex UB7 0AE

Responsible individual	Paul Brosnan
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Joanna Heller

Inspection date	15/11/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC423453

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Fire arrangements are not sufficiently robust to safeguard children in the event of a fire.
- Food hygiene arrangements fail to protect children from food-borne illness.
- Staff recruitment practices are not consistently sufficiently robust.
- Staff are not always provided with suitable training which reflects the needs of the children accommodated.
- Poor-quality record keeping fails to evidence any action taken or the quality of care provided.
- Locks are fitted to some internal doors, potentially preventing the children from accessing areas of their home.
- Notifications to the local host authority or Ofsted that are required by regulation have not been submitted.

The children's home strengths

- The children have made progress in relation to their education, health, personal care, behaviour and social skills.
- Staff provide individualised child-focused care, and the children feel consulted on all aspects of their life.
- The children are very positive about their experience of living at the home, and always feel well supported and safeguarded.
- Professionals and families have absolute confidence that the child's individual needs are well met by caring and nurturing staff.
- Staff work well in partnership with other agencies.
- Staff are individually committed to the children and develop bonds with the children, which makes them feel loved and nurtured.

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>12: The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to children who go missing from care and food safety, the registered person must ensure that:</p> <p>(2)(a)(i)(v) Staff understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person and 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.</p> <p>In particular, evidence that suitable actions are taken by staff to prevent children going missing and subsequent appropriate action to promote their welfare.</p> <p>(2)(d) 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> <p>In particular, ensure the safe storage of food.</p>	20/01/2017
<p>The registered person must ensure that the requirements of the Fire Safety Reform (Fire safety) Order 2005 and any regulations made under it are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25(2)(b))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that suitable fire prevention arrangements are in place.</p>	30/12/2016
<p>The registered person must only employ an individual to work at the children's home if the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of 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(3)(c)(d))</p>	20/01/2020

In particular, ensure that suitable references are obtained and verified for every member of staff working in the home.	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay of a significant event in the home. (Regulation 40 (4))	20/01/2017
The registered person must notify, without delay, the local authority for the area in which the children's home is located of every admission of a child into the home and every discharge of a child from the home. (Regulation 41(1))	20/01/2017

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home are only made when this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
In particular, review the need for, and use of, locks to communal areas of the home.
- Ensure that records are kept detailing all individual incidents when children go missing from the home (regulation 36 (schedule 3(14))). This information should be shared with the placing authority and, when appropriate, with the child's parents. Evaluation of missing incidents should be undertaken to identify any gaps in training, skills or knowledge for staff or to record and retain evidence of what worked well. This evaluation should inform the review of the quality of care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.31)
- Ensure that all staff have been adequately trained in the principles of restraint and any restraint techniques appropriate to the needs of the children the home is set up to care for, as defined in the home's statement of purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.57)
- Ensure that records of restraint are kept in manner which enables the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint, and to identify effective practice and respond promptly when any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity to amend practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

- Provide all staff with sufficiently frequent supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- Ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

In particular, ensure that all staff receive suitable training in food hygiene, and in preventing and responding to self-harm and child sexual exploitation.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to accommodate four children of either gender between the ages of 10 and 18 years old. The home offers emergency, short- and long-term placements for children who have emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/12/2015	Full	Good
24/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
22/01/2015	Full	Outstanding
25/03/2014	Interim	Good progress

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
<p>Although aspects of the direct care provided are good, issues in relation to safeguarding, leadership and management undermine the ability of the home as a whole to provide the good quality of support which staff desire. However, there are no failures which mean that children's safeguarding or well-being are not being promoted.</p> <p>On occasion, poor placement planning has resulted in group conflict and potentially the breakdown of two children's placements. However, the interim manager has taken stock and been more selective of who is placed, ensuring that the home can meet their needs. They have satisfied themselves that the mix of children in the home is suitable and promotes the development of the group. This has enabled the current group to gel well, make friendships and prevent conflict. One placing social worker said: 'It is lovely that he has the opportunity to begin to make friends.'</p> <p>The children receive individualised, child-focused care and support. They develop positive relationships with the staff, whom they trust. Children say that the home is pretty good and that it is not like a children's home, but feels like a proper home. There is laughter, good-natured teasing and affection between staff and children, which gives the home a warm, nurturing atmosphere. Children report that all the staff are really nice. One child said: 'I can talk to any staff about anything. They listen to me and are nice.'</p> <p>As a result of these positive relationships, all the children currently placed make personally significant progress in areas such as their personal presentation, behaviour and educational engagement. The children recognise this themselves, and are proud of their achievements and benefit from improved self-esteem. One professional said that the child whom they work with: 'Is thriving here; you cannot get better than this level of support. When he was first placed and prior to placement, there was lots of missing from care. Now the risk is almost gone. He is now going to school and there is no more offending.'</p> <p>The children are in good health and receive suitable guidance from staff on maintaining healthy lifestyles. However, staff's attempts to engage resistant children in preventative health checks have not been successful. Some, despite the support and guidance provided by staff, continue to engage in unhealthy behaviours such as smoking and, on occasion, using cannabis. Staff have not had training in drug and alcohol awareness or managing self-harm, despite having to support children who have these needs.</p>	

Staff have been proactive, working closely with schools and promoting the importance of education. As a result, all the children have had success in education, making progress from their starting points in attendance or attainment. All apart from one very newly placed child have suitable educational arrangements in place. Older children are helped to identify and apply for college places. The on-site learning support room is well equipped, and the staff work closely with education establishments to understand individual learning needs and provide support, for example providing one-to-one support to develop literacy, numeracy and the ability to tell the time, or help with homework. This has helped some children to engage better in formal learning environments as their confidence grows.

A variety of activities based on the children's individual interests is arranged, such as trips to the cinema, paintballing, roller skating and go-karting. However, like their peers, they enjoy playing on their games consoles, and meeting up and spending time with their friends in the locality. They have asked for individual bicycles and are looking forward to these arriving.

The children are involved in all day-to-day decisions about their daily lives, and have confidence that staff listen to them and will respond to any issues of concern which they may raise. They are supported to maintain friendships and family relationships which are important to them and have made new appropriate friendships with their peers in the home. None are currently undertaking formal preparation for independence plans, but all are encouraged to integrate fully into the usual activities of family life, such as shopping, cooking and taking responsibility for their laundry.

The fridge is well stocked and the children enjoy sociable mealtimes. They are able to make themselves snacks as they choose. However, not all staff have received training in food hygiene and the food is not always stored in a hygienic way which protects children and staff from consuming contaminated food. For example, raw meat was stored on top of cheese and other items which would not be cooked before eating.

The accommodation provides generous living space. The decor, furniture, pictures and accessories give a homely atmosphere. However, locks are fitted to some communal doors, including the learning support room, although staff say that these are not used. This is contrary to the ethos of the home and is without a risk assessment, nor is the approach detailed in the home's statement of purpose.

The children rate the home as either an eight or nine out of 10, and say that it is good to excellent. When asked what could be better, they said 'Nothing.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
<p>The children feel safe and well supported by the carers, who they believe have their best interests at heart. They say that they are able to talk to any of the staff about anything which is worrying them, and that staff sometimes nag them because they care.</p> <p>Staff have a suitable awareness of safeguarding and their duties under the government 'Prevent' strategy, having undertaken training in these areas. However, only one member of staff could be evidenced as having undertaken child sexual exploitation training, despite the home supporting children with identified high levels of risk. It is imperative that staff receive good-quality training which is regularly updated in order to manage risk effectively and robustly protect children.</p> <p>The actions that staff take to promote the safety and well-being of children who go missing are unclear, as the records maintained on how staff respond are poor, for example failing to detail the actions that staff take to prevent the child leaving, or to locate and contact the child, such as searching the area. Nor is there any evidence of the support that is offered to the child when they return. However, professionals describe the staff as acting appropriately and being deeply caring individuals who act appropriately and with due consideration to local protocols when children, including those with identified risks, such as offending or child sexual exploitation, go missing from the home.</p> <p>Behaviour strategies are making a positive difference for the children. While there have been stages when children have clearly struggled, both individually and as a group, either going missing or offending, these have now settled. Systems for promoting positive behaviours, and earning praise and rewards such as being 'house head boy', are embedded into the service. This approach is valued by the children, as they build up their positive rewards for something of personal value, for example towards the purchase of a new smartphone. This is helping them to break antisocial behaviour cycles and behave responsibly, for example on a number of occasions demonstrating caring values within the community by providing assistance to vulnerable members of the public. One professional said: 'Staff are nurturing and the home has a lovely atmosphere which young people do buy into.' Another professional said: 'He feels comfortable and safe within the home.'</p> <p>Physical intervention is infrequently used, and the majority of staff have received suitable training and are clear on the thresholds for use. However, one untrained agency member of staff has twice been an active participant in incidents of physical restraint. Having untrained staff undertake physical interventions potentially places children and others at risk of injury.</p>	

Staff vetting procedures are not consistently sufficiently robust to ensure that children are fully safeguarded from unsuitable people gaining employment at the home. Systems are in place to ensure that permanent staff do not work at the home until checks on their identity are verified. However, only one written reference could be evidenced for one member of staff and, when references are obtained, these are not always verified to ensure their validity. Agency staff do not work at the home unless there is evidence of a criminal records check having been completed. However, there is little other information regarding their experience and character. This means that there is insufficient scrutiny information which would potentially have a bearing on their suitability.

Health and safety arrangements are well managed with regard to regular maintenance checks. However, the fire risk assessment is not accurate and fails to reflect risk effectively. For example, it states that bedroom doors have had closures fitted following a recommendation from the local fire officer. However, the fire safety arrangements are not sufficiently robust. For example, none of the children's bedrooms on the first floor have fire closures, two doors have compromised integrity or missing intumescent strips and one door was propped open. The provider took immediate action during the inspection to arrange for the installation of improved arrangements, including fire door closures on all bedrooms, and confirmed installation within 24 hours of the inspection.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
<p>The leadership and management of the home are not yet good. The previously registered manager formally ceased their role in August. However, they had requested to cease their role some months prior to that. The deputy manager has also been on extended leave. The home, therefore, has not experienced consistent good-quality leadership and direction for an extended period of time. As a result, the home has not consistently been able to deliver the caring experience to children as set out in the statement of purpose.</p> <p>The interim management arrangements in place since September protect and promote children's safety and welfare. The interim manager, during this short tenure, has developed positive working relationships with staff and partner agencies. They have identified areas of concern and begun to introduce improvement which has resulted in positive developments within the service.</p> <p>The children receive good information about the service prior to admission, via the children's guide and the welcome booklet. The children are making progress from their starting points. Their needs are consistently prioritised and they are very positive about their experiences. However, for some children who previously lived at the home, this was not always the case and, as a result, their placements broke</p>	

down.

The staff work effectively in partnership with children and partner agencies, one of whom described the home as the 'best home for working in partnership'. One professional said: 'In my view, this home is really, really homely. It has a really warm atmosphere and staff know what's going on.' Another said: 'There is a natural warmth and friendliness in the team, and he warmed to this immediately.' Staff are individually caring and provide care which meets the needs of the individual children. They are well thought of by professionals. One described the staff as intuitive and responsive, and another said that the 'optimistic staff want to see the best in him. This has really helped him move on.'

The staff benefit from a wide-ranging training programme which includes enhancing staff awareness around current issues such as female genital mutilation and anti-radicalisation. However, the training has not been sufficiently targeted to meet the training and development needs of the staff at the home. For example, not all staff have completed training in identifying and dealing with child sexual exploitation, self-harm or addressing the use of drugs and alcohol, despite providing services to children who have these needs.

Staff report that they feel well supported and know what their responsibilities are. However, individual supervision arrangements are not sufficiently frequent to support and challenge staff professionally and effectively. For example, one new member of staff had only two supervisions in their four months of employment and one experienced member of staff received only two supervisions in the past eight months. All staff who have been working with children in a children's home for over two years have completed their level 3 diploma and all the remaining staff have been enrolled.

At the last inspection, the manager was asked to ensure that the staff are clear about the need for careful, objective and clear recording. However, there has been no improvement in this area. Recording systems within the home remain of poor quality, failing to demonstrate the support that staff provide on a day-to-day basis or in relation to significant events. For example, the records of children going missing fail to evidence the actions that staff take to ensure their safety or make them comfortable upon return. Furthermore, the records of a specific incident of conflict and physical restraint in the home are contradictory and confusing. This potentially led to the failure of the home to notify Ofsted of a significant incident, as required by regulation. While this has had no direct impact on children, the lack of clarity and accuracy inhibits the ease of establishing the events, the level of care offered and the impact of these events on the children. Further, this undermines the ability of managers to review incidents effectively to identify patterns and trends or areas where practice can improve.

The provider has not notified the host local authority of the admission and discharge of each child at the home. While this does not affect the children, it does

mean that the host authority does not hold current and accurate information about the children residing in their area.

The provider was responsive to issues raised at the inspection, quickly addressing issues of health and safety noted and developing action plans for improvement. They have met the majority of the recommendations set at the last inspection. However, quality assurance arrangements have not been of sufficient depth and breadth to give the provider clear insight into areas of concern within the home. The provider has identified a deterioration in the service and, as a result, begun to implement change. A new manager has been appointed and the interim manager, who has clear aspirations for the home and successfully implemented improvement, will remain in the role of deputy to support them.

One partner professional said, 'The positivity from the staff and the willingness to provide understanding and appropriate support to the young people' are the greatest strengths of the home. While a number of requirements and recommendations have been set, partner professionals and children remain positive about the support that they receive. There is a demonstrated commitment and capacity to improve the quality of service.

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 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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