

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	20/12/2016
Unique reference number	SC405985
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	ERA Care Limited
Registered provider address	Unit G22 Allen House, The Maltings, Station Road, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire CM21 9JX

Responsible individual	Stephen Milton
Registered manager	Hayley Roberts
Inspector	Rosie Davie (Lead)
Inspector	Joanna Heller

Inspection date	20/12/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
<p>The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection</p> <p>This home was judged good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has sustained effectiveness.</p> <p>The registered manager, staff and a recently appointed assistant manager dedicate time, patience and effort towards building successful relationships with each of the children, their families and the respective agencies involved in their plans. More than one agency said that the communication is very good.</p> <p>The registered manager has met the three requirements raised at the last inspection. There is now a system in place to ensure that return home interviews when there are incidents of children missing from the home take place. The recording of restraints provides the required detail. There has been an improvement in relationships between the children in the home. Two of the three recommendations have been met. One recommendation in relation to updating of the location risk assessment is not met which has minimal impact at this time.</p> <p>Some of the children are in education. One child is attending college. Others have difficulty with, or have not attended a mainstream provision for some time. The registered manager is a very good advocate for those children not in education. She liaises effectively with the relevant agencies to represent each individual child's circumstances, to help them to access the correct resource to meet their individual needs. However, records show that routines in the home, particularly around preparation for education, which have slipped. Some of the children can be resistant to the idea of getting up in the morning. The staff are not consistently doing enough to emphasise to every child the value of the routine required for attending education. Furthermore, the home has one computer located in the office. This arrangement does not provide an appropriate solution for each child to have access to the internet to support their education and any informal learning.</p> <p>A third child has moved in since the last inspection. The registered manager did not record the assessment of the suitability of this placement or the likely influence on the group of this child's arrival. Failure to produce a written risk assessment about the potential impact of a placement does not enable the staff team to understand, monitor or review the risk of any harm.</p>	

Physical intervention is rare. However, the number of incidents that the staff are involved in de-escalating in and around the home has increased. Although the children and the staff have good relationships, at times some of the children do not do as some of the staff ask and, as a result, some negative behaviours from the children have become accepted. All three of the children say, and inspectors observed, that they like living in the home. However, two of the children can be particularly verbally abusive to staff. Records show that some staff try to reason with the children, but do not hold boundaries consistently. Consequences, lack creativity and, in more than one record sampled, consequences were put in place the day after the event. The result is that overall, strategies to manage challenging behaviour are ineffective.

Some of the children smoke in the home. The staff have failed to undertake regular fire drills and they routinely leave the kitchen and living room doors propped open. This failure to meet fire regulations places children at increased risk in the event of a fire emergency. Staff say that they tell the children that they should not smoke in the building. However, the records do not sufficiently demonstrate that there is a consistent approach to offering the children advice and guidance about the impact of smoking. This does not encourage the children to make healthy lifestyle choices.

Some of the children have become involved in a dispute with the local children who had previously been their friends. This has resulted in complaints to other agencies and police mediation. The strategies to work in partnership with the police and, at the same time, to try and influence the children's behaviour in this area has been successful to a certain extent.

The children living in this home are at risk of exploitation. They have a history of going missing from the home for long periods of time and overnight. The missing person's liaison officer for the home said, 'I am impressed with how they have dealt with the girls' missing episodes.' This demonstrates that incidents of missing episodes are well managed. They have reduced in duration dramatically. For each child this represents an impressive improvement from their respective starting points. One placing social worker said, 'She has made progress in this placement and we have not had that for some time.' This demonstrates that despite the shortfalls identified during the inspection, the staff have found effective ways of engaging with and keeping each child at risk of exploitation safe from further harm from the wider community.

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care and accommodation for up to three children of either gender who have behavioural and/or emotional difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/07/2016	Full	Good
11/01/2016	Full	Requires improvement
15/06/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
19/11/2014	Full	Adequate

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>12: The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered provider must ensure:</p> <p>(2)(a)(i) that staff actively assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. This is in particular regard to impact risk assessments.</p>	28/02/2017
The registered provider must ensure that the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)(b))	28/02/2017
The registered provider must ensure that staff implement the behaviour management policy which sets out how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home. (Regulation 35 (1)(a))	28/02/2017

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18) In particular, ensure that the staff support every child in routines required to attend education.
- Ensure that all children have appropriate access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning, unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why this would not be appropriate. In such cases, the home should consider whether and how it can support each child to access a computer and the internet safely. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the

quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.19)

- Ensure that, in line with their individual health plans and the ethos of the home, there is clear evidence to support that each child is consistently offered advice, support and guidance on health and well-being. Collectively staff should have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to help children to understand and, where necessary, work to change negative behaviours in key areas of health and well-being such as, but not limited to, nutrition and healthy diet, exercise, drugs, alcohol and tobacco. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.18)
- Ensure that the review of the location risk assessment includes the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and the strategies for managing these. Providers should refer to the non-statutory advice about the location assessment process: 'Children's homes regulations amendments 2014: Advice for children's homes providers on new duties under regulations that came in to effect in January and April 2014'. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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