

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	21/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC470645
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Surecare Residential Limited
Registered provider address	13a Apton Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3SP

Responsible individual	Emma Barr
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Rosie Davie

Inspection date	21/02/2017
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 as good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has declined in effectiveness.</p> <p>The registered manager has left the home. A new manager has been appointed and has been in post for approximately three weeks.</p> <p>Before leaving, the registered manager did meet two of three regulations made at the last inspection. For example, the approach to ensuring that return to home interviews occur following episodes of missing has improved. However, one regulation in relation to helping the children to develop an understanding of what is acceptable behaviour is repeated.</p> <p>Since the last inspection, four of the children have moved on. Their onward destinations vary. For example, one placement was ended by the provider, and another child returned to live with their family. Four new children have come to live in the home. Most have lived in other social care settings. They also have complex social and behavioural histories including exploitation, self-injury and aggression.</p> <p>The children are known to have difficulties in engaging with education. School attendance and motivation to take part in learning varies. For example, one child regularly attends school, and the staff provide transport. On the day of this inspection, another child had gone to the school run by the provider, but this small success follows a lengthy period of refusal. The staff do try to encourage the children to get up and take part in education or home tutoring. However, some of the children will remain in bed for some of the daytime. One child said, 'Yes, the staff do come and get me up for education, but I ignore them when I feel like it.' The staff's ability to engage and motivate the children is inconsistent and varies from child to child.</p> <p>At the point of admission, senior managers write detailed initial impact risk assessments. However, the information from the initial assessments is not used effectively by the staff team to consistently put into practice strategies already identified about how best to help and protect the children. Additionally, risk assessments are not routinely updated after any incidents. This means that all the staff cannot share an understanding of, or know how to approach, situations as they arise with some of the children. The result is that well-meaning staff make</p>	

mistakes. In some situations, this leads to an escalation in the children's behaviour and in some cases a failure to safeguard children.

In addition to the registered manager leaving, there has been a high turnover of the staff. Some staff have minimal experience relevant to caring for the children with significant emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some of the children stay up through the night. During a recent incident, all of the children barricaded themselves into one of the communal living areas. Later, one of the children, known to be at high risk of exploitation, left the building without the staff's knowledge. This one example demonstrates that the staff did not have the necessary skills or experience to de-escalate or monitor the situation effectively and therefore keep this group of children safe.

During the last recorded fire drill, which took place in the early evening, one child refused to get out of bed. Two other children held the front door to prevent the staff and one child from leaving the home. Records show that the staff did make an effort to speak with two of the children about the impact of their behaviours. However, in the context of the children smoking in the house, this approach does not go far enough to demonstrate that all of the children would know what to do in the event of a fire emergency. This does not ensure that all preventative action is effective.

The provider is responsive and very good at liaising with other agencies. The provider usually ensures that notifications are sent to Ofsted, but this inspection identified that on one occasion, when one child had left the home and returned with facial injuries, a formal notification was not made. The incident took place some months ago, and the placing local authority was made aware at the time. This important information may have alerted the regulator more quickly to the issues for this particular child.

Incident reports show that sometimes the staff are successful in de-escalating issues when individual children become upset or aggressive. However, the staff say, and some reports show, that recently when more than one child is challenging, other children join in, which means that the children can have a negative impact on one another. There are also times when some of the children do not get on well with one another. The staff say that they intervene when the children are threatening to fight with one another. The approach to behaviour management varies. The staff do try to implement boundaries and identify consequences, but they frequently lack creativity and have little impact. The result is a shortfall in the approach to implementing the behaviour management strategy, because increasingly the staff struggle to manage the dynamic of this group effectively.

New staff members have not had the necessary training, as described in the statement of purpose, to help them to fulfil their role. One lone member of staff with minimal time in post took a child in crisis to a hospital. The child is known to be physically and verbally aggressive to adults and is known to abscond. The

member of staff was assaulted twice by the child, who absconded from the member of staff. The member of staff appropriately told the manager that she had bitten down on the child's finger because the child's finger had been in the staff member's mouth during the child's second assault of her. The incident was reported to the placing local authority social work team, but not to the designated officer. Since this inspection, the matter has been correctly reported. However, in addition to highlighting significant shortfalls about staff experience and training, this event represents a failure to implement the safeguarding policy effectively on this occasion.

Physical interventions had increased for a short while, but in the last few months have reduced. The records sampled for physical intervention gave no cause for concern. Missing continues for some of the children, but not all of the children go missing. On the vast majority of occasions, the staff have become better at taking the correct action when they know that a child has left the home or their care. They call the police and report the children missing.

One child spoken to said that the home is fine. Senior leaders are good at dealing with complaints and issues when they are brought to their attention. Overall, the placing local authority social workers offer generous and positive feedback about their experiences of working with the staff. They say that the managers are good at arranging meetings to discuss placement issues and proactive when incidents occur.

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care for up to four children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is one of a small group run by an independent provider. A psychologist is available to offer direct psychological support to the children. The provider also operates a school. The staff are available to support the children to access this resource.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/05/2016	Full	Good
25/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
19/05/2015	Full	Requires improvement
23/07/2014	Full	Good

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>11: The positive relationships standard</p> <p>In order to meet the positive relationship standard, the registered provider must ensure that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from relationships based on:</p> <p>(b) an understanding about acceptable behaviour</p> <p>(c) positive responses to other children and adults.</p>	28/04/2017
<p>12: The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure:</p> <p>(2)(i) that staff 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>This is with specific reference to updating risk assessments effectively.</p>	28/04/2017
<p>12: The protection of children standard*</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered provider must ensure that:</p> <p>(2)(b) the home's day-to-day running is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm.</p>	14/03/2017
<p>13: The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard,</p> <p>(1) the registered person must enable, inspire and lead a culture in relation to the children's home that:</p> <p>(a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>(b) promotes their welfare.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to:</p> <p>(a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with</p>	28/04/2017

the approach and ethos and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose. (c) ensures that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.	
The registered provider must ensure that the requirements of the Regulatory Reform Act are complied with. (Regulation 25) This is with specific reference to routine and effective fire drills.	28/04/2017
The registered person must implement the safeguarding policy intended to safeguard children accommodated in the home from abuse or neglect. (Regulation 34 (1)(a)) This is with specific reference to liaison with the delegated officer for the local area when there is unusual physical contact between staff and children.	28/04/2017
The registered person must implement the behaviour management policy, which sets out how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the home. (Regulation 35 (a))	28/04/2017

*A compliance notice has been issued

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that Ofsted is notified if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious (40(4)(e)). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)

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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