

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	28/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC462951
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	Francis Williams
Inspector	Rosie Davie

Inspection date	28/02/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Requires improvement
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection	
<p>This home was judged as requires improvement at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has improved effectiveness.</p> <p>The children living in the home at the time of the monitoring visit conducted on 5 July 2016 have now moved on. The emergency short-term placements that followed resulted in different destinations for those children. For example, one child who was upset about the geographical location of the placement went to live nearer to his family. During this time, incidents in the home and episodes of children going missing occurred more frequently.</p> <p>In the last four months, there has been a notable change. Most of the staff are new and there is a new assistant manager who has relevant experience of social care. The registered manager continues to be in post. He said, 'Matching the right children to be in this home together is my priority.'</p> <p>Since the admission of the current placements, the frequency of incidents and of occasions of children going missing has reduced dramatically. One placing social worker said, 'Our child is pushing the boundaries, which the staff are managing well, but he is not absconding, which is good progress.'</p> <p>All but one of the requirements that were made at the last inspection have been met. For example, the provider was able to clearly demonstrate that the complaints procedure is followed to good effect. However, the health and well-being standard is being raised again. While some of the staff do try to encourage the children to eat healthily and take exercise – for example, by purchasing a membership for the local gym and going out occasionally with one child for a run – the overall approach is not far-reaching enough. This means that the strategic approach from the staff group does not result in meaningful change. This has contributed to one of the children gaining weight and becoming more sedentary.</p> <p>There have been no incidents of physical intervention since the last inspection. One child said that the staff are 'brilliant' and fair when implementing any sanctions. However, the records show that there is not a consistent method for the recording of the sanctions and rewards, which indicates that there is not a coherent approach being used by all of the staff. This shortfall in the approach to behaviour management could result in the number of incidents increasing.</p>	

Well-written care plans outline the proposed routes for offering support to the children. However, the plans that were sampled contain information that is no longer relevant and do not record the children's view of the information that is written in the plan. This is a small home, so this shortfall currently has a minimal impact. However, if it is not addressed, it is likely to lead to mistakes being made.

The staff work with good intention of helping the children to value and benefit from their individualised plans for education. For these children, the approach results in some continuity in attendance, and this is a significant achievement for this home. When the children begin to show resistance to attending school, the staff are quick to liaise with the relevant agencies. This helps the children to sustain a level of engagement with education. It demonstrates to the children that the staff who are on shift do not operate in isolation from the other influential agencies that are in the children's networks. The children's families and the significant people in their lives are welcome to visit the home.

The registered manager and the assistant manager are working effectively with the staff to help them to understand their role in relation to safeguarding and supporting the children. For example, in staff meetings, the staff discuss and practise how to respond to different situations by using 'what if' scenarios. This represents a significant improvement in the approach to helping the staff to develop their confidence in dealing with the children. The registered manager said, 'This team are good at getting out of the office and spending time with the children.'

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is one of a small group of homes that are run by the organisation. It provides care and support for up to three children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/06/2016	Full	Requires improvement
26/01/2016	Full	Good
05/11/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
14/01/2015	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) meet(s) 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>10: The health and well-being standard</p> <p>In order to meet the health and well-being standard the registered provider must ensure that:</p> <p>(1)(c) children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles.</p>	<p>31/03/2017</p>

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that the behaviour management strategy is understood and applied at all times by staff, and that it is kept under review and revised where appropriate (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 46, paragraph 9.34). This is with specific reference to the system for recording consequences and rewarding positive behaviours.
- Ensure that children are encouraged by staff to see the home’s records as ‘living documents’ in order to support them to view and contribute to the record in a way that reflects their voice on a regular basis. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 58, paragraph 11.19)

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 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 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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