

1240936

Registered provider: Meadows Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides care for three children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is owned and operated by a private organisation under a contract with a local authority.

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 June 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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.

Date of last inspection: Registered 14 November 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- This is a new home that is establishing a service with a relatively inexperienced staff team and under a manager who is new to the role.
- Safeguarding arrangements are not yet fully effective. Not all staff have good knowledge of the organisation's reporting, notification and safeguarding procedures. This puts staff and children at risk and impacts on the stability of the home. Risk from bullying is underestimated, both towards staff and between children. Risk to children online is not managed in children's daily life, and staff make no checks on children's online world.
- Children have not had consistency or continuity of care because the registered person has not yet established a fully staffed, skilled, experienced and permanent team. Inexperienced staff have not had the professional supervision and support that they have needed to develop and improve their practice.
- The work of the staff team in delivering care is not firmly linked to the children's local authority plan or effectively overseen by the registered manager. In one case, the staff do not have a placing authority plan relating to the placement on which to base their care. Consequently, not all children's progress is maximised.
- Systems to monitor and review the quality of care have not been effective in delivering improvement. The first six-monthly review of the quality of care was not based on the feedback and opinions of children.

The children's home's strengths:

- Increasingly creative and relevant project work helps children to think about racism, hate crime and extremism.
- Children like the feel and look of the home and have staff whom they can trust. There are constructive, affectionate, supportive relationships between staff and children. All three children are positive about their experiences and want to stay. Their social workers are pleased with the children's placements.
- The organisation supports children and staff well with accessible supportive psychological therapy. This means that advice about emotional difficulties is prompt.

Recent inspection history

This is the first full inspection.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure 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 harm to any child; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) and (2)(a) (i) (v) (vi) (vii))</p> <p>In particular, implement accurate risk assessments, take action about bullying and safety online, and implement policies and procedures to protect children.</p>	31/07/2017
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that helps children aspire to fulfil their potential and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1) and (2)(c) (d) (e) (h)) 	30/09/2017
<p>The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14(1)(a) and (2)(c))</p>	31/07/2017
<p>The registered person must ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction and that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(1)(a) and (4)(a)(b))</p>	31/07/2017

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; and are kept up to date. In this case, a copy of any plan for the care of the child prepared by the child's placing authority, and of the placement plan. (Regulation 36(1)(a)(b) Schedule 3(19))	31/07/2017
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	31/07/2017
The registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (2)(b)(5))	30/09/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure the necessary support is given to children to enable them to access their education or training. This refers to, by structuring healthy daily sleeping and waking routines. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.13)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children make variable progress. Two of the five children placed at the home since opening have both needed to move out because they were getting into more difficulties. Children who remain are making some positive steps.

The organisation's visiting psychologist helps the staff to track children's outcomes. This helps the staff to have an established baseline of children's individual needs. However, lengthy internal care planning documents are not linked to this process, or the child's local authority's placement plan and statutory reviews recommendations. Consequently, staff lose sight of the local authority plan, such as the need to improve relationships with parents, and have omitted to implement a request from a local authority to tell a parent each time their child went missing. Furthermore, not all children have an up-to-date local authority care or pathway plan. One local authority has not formally reviewed one child's placement since arrival at the home in crisis. More positively, one independent reviewing officer said how pleased she was with the delivery of care against the plan for one child.

The staff have not been able to maintain good daily routines for one child, who is

educated at home by a mentor from his school. Consequently, he is not awake or ready to learn each weekday morning and does not get a good day's education. In some instances, the child is up to two hours late before learning can start. Despite exclusion or dips in attendance at school or college, other children are taking exams and have received encouragement and practical support from staff in completing revision.

Children's health is good, and staff have worked creatively to engage professional support for children about sexual health and relationships. A social worker told the inspector of the success that staff had had in getting one child to attend their health, dental and optical appointments, including managing to get glasses for them.

Children like living near their families. One said, 'I'm out more and active. Seeing family.' Children go on enjoyable group activities with staff or socialise with friends outside the home. However, children are not developing enriching individual hobbies or community activities. The manager has not taken up the offer of support with community integration from local community leaders. This has been a missed opportunity to strengthen community networks.

Children are overwhelmingly positive about their experience, even though there has been some conflict between them. Relationships with staff are good, despite staff receiving a high level of racially motivated abuse and targeting. Children feel listened to. For example, one child told the inspector, 'I can sit down and speak to the staff when I'm having a bad day.' Another described relationships with staff as close, saying, 'Staff have time for me.'

One child said that the home was 'better than foster care because you get more help'. Children like the decor of the house and the garden. Two children said, 'It's nice here.' Another said, 'Pretty much love it.'

The children and their social workers firmly believe that the children are in the right place for now and are moving on with the skills that they need for the next stage of their lives. The children said that if they needed help they could ask. One child told the inspector, 'My confidence is big here. The staff show me how to get about, living daily life really.'

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Children reported feeling safe. However, aspects of safeguarding practice is not yet good enough. For example, the registered manager and the staff team have not consistently recognised risk and implemented safeguarding procedures. Staff do not always secure the advice of their line managers about actions to take after allegations or incidents. Serious incidents have occurred, and the manager has not notified these incidents to Ofsted, nor to the safeguarding lead.

Staff do not understand internet safety. This includes ensuring that children safely use

the internet. For example, staff have been racially abused and bullied by children and their friends through live internet streams using a smartphone. Staff have been unable to implement children's risk assessments that say that they will remove mobile phones at night, or supervise all internet use. Senior staff told the inspector that they think that this may be because some staff lack confidence. Communication by the registered manager and staff with the police and the criminal justice organisations about offending or harmful behaviour has not always been effective. Staff have not always communicated with the police about racially motivated or violent threats.

Children do go missing from care, and a prolonged period of absence was the cause of one child's placement ending. The service works with the children, police and placing authority to reduce this behaviour and avoid risks for children who have previously been at risk of sexual exploitation. When children have committed offences, they get support from staff to keep to the requirements of their criminal orders and pay off fines. Children learn about well-being, the impact of hate crime, and extremism through frequent planned conversations and activities directed by staff.

Staff use defusing techniques to help children self-regulate their behaviour. Staff are increasingly using restorative justice to help children think about the impact of their behaviour on others. One social worker described the extreme challenges presented by one child gave the staff. However, the social worker said, the staff 'understand where the anger is coming from'. Another social worker described 'a massive period of regression' for their child, but that this had changed recently, because the service had 'put in a lot of strategies to slow him down'.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager has been in post since the home opened in October 2016. This is his first post as registered manager, and he is working towards his level 5 diploma in residential care.

Children have not had consistency or continuity of staffing. The small, permanent staff team has a range of skills and experience, but staff members are largely new to residential care. Minimum staffing ratios and insufficient permanent, skilled staff to run the rota mean that there have been occasions when staff still in probation, with little experience of residential care, have led shifts working alongside an agency member of staff. The team has been reliant on agency staff, who lack in-depth knowledge of the children or the organisation. Staff said that this restricts their ability to spend quality time in the community with individual children. One child said about the use of agency staff, 'I don't want them.' The organisation has now recruited to all vacant posts, and new permanent staff are awaiting start dates.

The manager's oversight of care planning and delivery of care is still in its infancy. For example, the registered manager is not monitoring children's educational attendance or achievement, and is not taking a strategic overview of staff care practice because

supervision, induction and performance management is infrequent and ineffective. The manager reports pressure on him to support staff on shift because of their inexperience. Training is planned well, but staff have not implemented their knowledge of key policies, despite support from the organisation. Children's continuity of care is further weakened when staff are unable to work during investigations into their performance. Consequently, the absence of self-evaluation and the lack of supervision mean that the manager and the staff are not sufficiently clear about what they need to do to improve consistency of care.

Staff and children benefit from the input of the organisation's psychologist. Advice and support is quickly available when needed. The increasingly creative project work is a developing asset to the team. One child reflected that, because of support from staff, she was able to participate in her first statutory review.

Children said that they like the staff, and they take their advice and life experience on board. A social worker described the importance of the makeup of the staff team for their child: 'Staff have given him a good model for his future. Previously [he] wouldn't listen to women. He has strong female characters at the home who tell it like it is. He listens.'

Professionals spoke positively of the manager, whom they see as an advocate for the children and 'a good calming influence'. An independent reviewing officer said in regard to one child in the home that the manager 'knows the young person well, has ideas, and comes across as interested and that he cares, which I am sure is picked up by the young person. The manager is proactive [and] has rung me before reviews to check things rather than waiting till last minute.'

There are many positives about this newly established home, and the organisation has the capacity for further improvement.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1240936

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Meadows Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Egerton House, Wardle Road, Rochdale, Lancashire
OL12 9EN

Responsible individual: Niel Shelmerdine

Registered manager: Nigel Rowe

Inspector

Christy Wannop, social care inspector

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