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Registered provider: Cove Care Residential Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for three young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and /or mental health disorders. A private company operates the home.

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 September 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: 13 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Requires improvement

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

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

- Staff practice of locking certain doors at night restricts young people's access to their home.
- Young people not in full-time education are not engaged in suitable structured activities that help to counter barriers to learning.
- Young people do not receive effective support and encouragement from staff to pursue and sustain individual hobbies and interests in the wider community.
- Staff do not effectively progress young people's independence skills.
- Staff do not have the necessary knowledge of online safety to support young people's day-to-day care arrangements effectively.
- Individual risk assessments for young people lack sufficient analysis and review. As a result, staff do not always clearly understand how to manage or reduce all known risks.
- Behaviour management strategies are weak because staff do not consistently follow agreed plans.
- Some areas of the home require improvement to make sure that they are safe and homely.
- Fire safety procedures are weak.
- Managers do not consistently record the outcome of young people's complaints.
- Managers do not make sure that independent return interviews are offered to young people when they return from missing episodes.
- Not all staff are suitably vetted prior to commencing employment.
- The management review and evaluation of the home's records and performance lack rigour. This hinders improvements in how staff understand and respond to young people's needs and behaviour.

The children's home's strengths

- Staff value and recognise young people's individuality. Young people feel valued for who they are, which improves their confidence and self-esteem.
- Young people are able to identify staff whom they get on with and can confide in.
- Staff ensure that young people maintain regular and positive contact with their families. They provide young people with practical and emotional support to further these relationships.
- Staff support young people to access independent advocates.
- Staff support young people to access health and therapeutic services that help to promote their physical and emotional well-being.

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 13/02/2017 | Full | Requires improvement |

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult and that the registered person ensures that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6(1) and (2)(b)(vi)(c)(ii))</p> | 13/11/2017 |
| <p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff –</p> <p>support each child's learning and development, including understanding barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers.</p> <p>ensure that each child has access to appropriate equipment, facilities and resources to support the child's learning. This is in specific reference to desks and study areas in the home. (Regulation 8(1) and (2)(a)(iii)(b))</p> | 13/11/2017 |
| <p>The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff help each child to –</p> <p>develop the child's interests and hobbies and make a positive contribution to the home and wider community. (Regulation 9(1))</p> | 13/11/2017 |

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| and (2)(a)(i)(iii)) | |
| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff –</p> <p>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>help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii))</p> | 13/11/2017 |
| <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.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to –</p> <p>ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b) and (2)(e)(f)(h))</p> | 13/11/2017 |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that children can access all appropriate areas of the children’s home. Any limitations should be kept under review and if necessary revised. (Regulation 21(b)(c)(iii))</p> | 13/11/2017 |
| <p>The registered person must ensure after consultation with the fire and rescue authority adequate means of escape from the home in the event of fire.(Regulation 25(1)(b))</p> | 13/11/2017 |
| <p>The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children’s home if full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(3)(d))</p> | 13/11/2017 |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any</p> | 13/11/2017 |

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| complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39(3)) | |
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Recommendations

- Ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to recognise and be alert for any signs that might indicate a child is in any way at risk of harm. Specifically this relates to staff being aware of e-safety for young people and ensuring plans are in place to monitor their internet usage. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.12)
- Ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45 ,paragraph 9.30)

Inspection judgements

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

The quality of individualised care and young people's progress and experiences vary. Some young people are making progress, while others do not actively engage in the daily routines of the home. All enjoy a committed staff team that works hard to ensure that each young person is settled and happy. Those who have previous experience of placement disruptions are beginning to develop trusting relationships. There have been no new admissions or discharges since the last inspection.

Young people have positive relationships with staff. They benefit from a staff team that shows considerable patience and commitment. As one young person told inspectors, 'I know they really love me. They have helped me with my anger.' Some young people are happy in the home whereas others would like to live closer to their own families.

Young people's attendance and engagement in education are variable. One young person has made significant progress and has returned to full-time education. Others receive their education on a part-time basis through tuition received at the home, while others are currently not enrolled in any education provision. This means that some young people are left without meaningful activities for part of the day. As none of the young people has a desk in their bedroom, opportunities to complete independent study are limited. During the inspection, some young people stayed in bed until their education began at midday. This

means that young people are not getting used to the routine that attending education brings. Staff are inconsistent in their promotion and encouragement of young people to attend education. This has resulted in young people being late for tutors or not attending at all. The lack of education for some young people affects their future education and career prospects.

Young people have clear health plans. They are all registered with the relevant primary healthcare services. Young people have access to specialist in-house therapeutic services. There are good links with specialist health services, such as mental health services. As one social worker commented, '[The young person] is making brilliant progress with her engagement with the placement therapist, which is enabling her to develop coping strategies and reduce her self-harm.' This demonstrates that young people receive specialist input that is tailored to meet individual needs. Young people's medication is stored and administered by trained and competent staff.

Staff consult with young people about the day-to-day running of the home. Young people contribute to regular house meetings and key-work sessions. Young people confirmed that their opinions and suggestions are put into practice whenever possible. For example, young people recently suggested that if staff purchased a water filter it would reduce the necessity to buy bottled water. This was subsequently actioned by staff.

Young people are aiming for greater independence and autonomy, but how staff support them to achieve this is not clear. There is limited evidence of their independence skills being consistently promoted and progressed by staff. Staff have access to structured programmes to help young people develop their life skills, but these are not systematically completed. Although young people have gained some practical independence skills, there is no assessment or evaluation of key skills. This makes it difficult to assess their readiness to move on or to measure their progress.

Young people do not receive consistent support and encouragement from staff to engage in positive activities outside the home. Staff do not progress opportunities for young people to develop sporting talents and individual hobbies. Young people are socially isolated and have limited opportunity to engage in and contribute to the local community. This limits the opportunities that young people have to promote their self-esteem and make new friends.

Young people maintain links with their families in accordance with their care plans. Staff facilitate and supervise young people's time with their families even if they live a considerable distance away. This ensures that young people are not isolated from their families and gives them a sense of identity.

Young people know how to make a complaint. They have regular access to independent advocacy services. This helps them to feel listened to. The manager, however, has not ensured that the outcomes of young people's complaints are recorded.

The home is appropriately furnished and young people are able to personalise their bedrooms. The rear lawn is well maintained and decorated by summer flowering pots made by the young people. However, the feeling of homeliness is compromised by poor

maintenance in some areas of the home. The side access to the garden is overgrown and neglected, and both bathrooms require work to address mould and to replace worn seals. This has a detrimental impact on young people's experiences of living in the home.

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

Risks assessments are not consistently reviewed or updated. This means that potentially unsafe situations are not reviewed and staff lack guidance on how to manage these situations should they occur. When risk assessments are written, staff do not consistently make sure that actions identified in safety plans to reduce risk are completed.

For those young people at risk of self-harm, staff are alert to the signs that they are struggling to cope. Staff try to be creative in responding to these behaviours and work with specialist services so that young people receive the support that they need to manage their emotions safely. However, staff do not ensure that risk management plans are followed. For example, where young people are identified as being at risk of taking an overdose, staff do not routinely undertake 'mouth checks' when giving medication or ensure that other checks identified in their safety plans are completed.

Young people have behaviour management plans, but the approach to behaviour management is weak. Consequences and rewards strategies are not consistently followed by staff and are ineffective in changing behaviour. For example, education attendance has been an issue for some young people. As a response to this, young people are not allowed access to the internet when they do not attend education. Staff have not consistently used this sanction, and young people have found other ways to access the internet. The manager has failed to check the effectiveness of this strategy.

The good relationship between staff and young people means that young people feel safe and secure in their home. Staff complete training in the use of physical restraint and de-escalation techniques. Incidents of physical restraint are rare because staff focus on verbal de-escalation and distraction techniques. When restraint is necessary to keep young people safe, incidents are appropriately recorded.

Incidents of young people going missing from the home are reducing. Staff work with family members, placing authorities and local police officers to consider increased risks. When young people do go missing, staff update missing from home risk assessments. However, independent return interviews are not consistently offered to young people. Staff fail to challenge placing authorities about this. This does not promote young people's safety and welfare.

The doors to the upstairs bathroom and kitchen are locked and not accessible to young people at specific times. This means that young people's access around the home is restricted and potentially places them at risk because they cannot access a possible fire escape. This was a shortfall identified at the last inspection and managers have failed to review this practice. This requirement will be repeated.

Staff are not effective in keeping young people safe in their use of the internet and social media. Although there are systems in place to check their access to the home's internet, not all staff are confident about developing effective strategies to manage this. Therefore, young people find alternative ways via their mobile phones to access social media.

Managers fail to ensure that young people are effectively protected by safe recruitment practices. Staff are not appropriately vetted and assessed before an appointment is made. The manager does not challenge gaps in employment histories. This practice does not promote the safety of the young people by preventing unsuitable adults from working with them.

Core staff refresh their safeguarding training. This training includes modules on child protection, safeguarding legislation, the management of allegations, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation.

Staff make sure that the home is kept safe by carrying out regular health and safety checks and making sure that equipment is serviced. There is a detailed location risk assessment that highlights risk factors in the surrounding area and indicates how these will be managed. However, fire safety arrangements are weak. Staff have failed to update fire risk assessments and evacuation procedures following the decision to move fire extinguishers into the staff room. The director has now sought an independent fire safety review and advice from the local fire and rescue service.

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

The home has an appropriately qualified registered manager in place. The manager has been in post since August 2016. She holds a level 4 national vocational qualification in leadership, health and social care. The manager was not present during this inspection.

The manager has not taken enough action to ensure that all of the requirements raised at the last inspection have been addressed. Gaps remain in the monitoring and review systems. The manager does not use the home's monitoring systems to ensure that the quality of care that young people receive is regularly evaluated. There is a lack of learning from incidents. As a result, the experiences and progress for some young people is limited. This highlights weaknesses in the manager's monitoring and overview of the service.

All permanent staff either have achieved, or will complete within the statutory timescales, a level 3 diploma in residential childcare. This ensures that staff have the right skills and knowledge to work effectively with young people.

Team meetings and supervision take place on a regular basis, and detailed records evidence the discussions held. Staff views of the manager differ; some report that the manager is 'supportive', while others describe being undermined by her approach. There is a recognition that there are inconsistencies in practice within the team. The manager is aware of this and has addressed these both individually in supervision and in team meetings. A new weekly

planner is being introduced to promote consistency.

The manager has updated the statement of purpose to reflect staffing changes. This sets out the vision, values and aims of the service. In turn, this helps placing authorities, parents and other interested parties to have a clear understanding of what they can expect from the service. This requirement made at the last inspection is met.

Partnership working between the manager, the placing authority and other professionals is good. The manager and staff maintain constructive relationships with education workers, therapeutic staff and children's social workers. The manager and staff challenge other professionals when necessary, to secure appropriate services for young people. For example, a recent decision by a local child and adolescent mental health service to end a service for one young person has been effectively challenged by both the manager and the director. Collaborative working relationships help to promote young people's welfare.

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: 1231311

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Cove Care Residential Ltd

Registered provider address: Cove Care Residential Ltd, 16 Waterloo Road, Wolverhampton WV1 4BL

Responsible individual: Lee Smith

Registered manager: Moira Kennedy

Inspector

Anne Daly, social care inspector

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