

1229534

Registered provider: Halliwell Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to accommodate seven children, regardless of gender, between the ages of seven and 12 years old. The home offers a two-year programme, supported by therapy, for children who have emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 25 to 26 October 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and children, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and children 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. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 9 November 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

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

- Some care practice at the home impacts negatively on the welfare of children. For example, children are not allowed to have their outdoor shoes in the house. This has resulted in children leaving the property unauthorised in bare feet or in slippers. The police and one local authority have raised concerns about this practice, but it continues to be organisational policy.
- The views of one child about extremism have failed to be monitored, and subsequent advice from the safeguarding lead did not lead to a 'Prevent' referral. This lack of robust intervention has provided an opportunity for the young person's views to manifest and grow.
- Although the home has Wi-Fi facilities, children are not able to access the internet for either recreational or educational purposes in their home. Nor are they allowed to have mobile phones. Children say that they are not allowed to celebrate Halloween. This practice means that their lives are not equitable with their friends and peers living in the same community.
- The home environment is not always maintained to a high standard. Delays in carrying out some repairs mean that children have not been protected quickly enough from avoidable hazards.
- Since the last inspection, a serious complaint from a local authority has not been notified to Ofsted in line with regulatory requirements. This compromises the regulator's ability to monitor and review the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the home.
- Staff lock internal communal doors at night to manage children's behaviour. This practice is not subject to review and does not enable children to develop skills and coping strategies to improve their behaviour.
- Management monitoring systems are not yet fully effective. Leaders and managers have not identified the shortfalls which are identified as part of this inspection.
- The professional supervision of staff varies in frequency. New staff do not have a regular opportunity to reflect on and improve their practice through regular formal review.
- There are shortfalls in staff training. For example, the majority of staff have yet to undertake training in radicalisation and some have not attended refresher courses in physical intervention. This does not fully equip staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to support the individual needs of all the children in their care.

The children's home's strengths:

- All children are progressing well in their education and are supported to achieve full attendance at school, including off-site schools.
- Staff encourage children to participate in activities. As a result, children access a range of social and recreational opportunities.
- There is good support for children in relation to their mental health, through regular clinical sessions.
- Children and their families are supported to develop and maintain good relationships.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/11/2016	Full	Good

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>7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard</p> <p>Ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare. (Regulation 7(2)(a)(i))</p> <p>In particular, with regards to internet use, mobile phones, celebrations in the house, holidays and playing in each other's bedrooms.</p>	03/12/2017
<p>8: The education standard</p> <p>In order to meet the education standard, the registered person must ensure that:</p> <p>each child has access to appropriate equipment, facilities and resources to support the child's learning;</p> <p>with particular regard to Wi-Fi in the home. (Regulation 8(b))</p>	03/12/2017
<p>11: The positive relationships standard</p> <p>In order to meet the positive relationships standard, the registered person must ensure:</p> <p>(1) that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on–</p> <p>(a) mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>(b) an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p> <p>(c) positive responses to other children and adults; and</p> <p>(i) 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>	03/12/2017

(Regulation 11(1)(a)(b)(c)(i))	
<p>12: The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to children who go missing from care and extremism, the registered person must ensure that:</p> <p>Staff understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person and 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. (Regulation 12(2)(a)(i)(v))</p> <p>In particular, evidence that more suitable actions are taken by staff to prevent children from going missing and that when extremist views are vocalised, staff take action to promote children's welfare</p> <p>The premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12(2)(d))</p>	03/12/2017
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay of a significant event in the home. (Regulation 40(4))	03/12/2017
The registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. In particular, to avoid as much as possible any sense that the home is an institution, as identified in this document. (Regulation 16(5))	03/12/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home are only made when this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- In particular, review the need for, and use of, locks to communal areas.
- Ensure that all staff are adequately trained in the principles of restraint and any restraint techniques appropriate to the needs of the children the home is set up to care for, as defined in the home's statement of purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph

9.57)

- Provide all staff with sufficiently frequent supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- Ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

In particular, ensure that all staff receive suitable training with regard to radicalisation and also for the qualifications and credit framework (QCF) level 4 'Pillars of parenting' certificate, as listed in the statement of purpose.

Inspection judgements

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

Staff do not provide care that is good enough or that is tailored to the needs of each child. For example, children are not able to have their outdoor shoes in the house. When children return from school, staff put the children's shoes into a lean-to at the side of the house, which is then locked when children's behaviour is disruptive. This has led to children leaving the home without their shoes, and this places them at increased risk of injury. In January 2017, a local authority raised a complaint about this practice on behalf of one of the children. In August 2017, the police returned a child to the home after he was found in the town centre with no shoes on. More recently, another child vacated the property in his slippers. He subsequently slipped on a local supermarket floor. Despite these concerns being expressed about the increased risk to children and their welfare, the registered manager continues to withhold children's outdoor shoes in an attempt to stop children leaving the home in an unauthorised manner. This practice is supported by the responsible individual at the organisation.

Other examples of practice which have no clear reasoning for their use include the removal of children's belongings for periods of 24 hours for 'negative behaviour', and the use of bedrooms for 'reflection time'. One child said, 'When we come home from school we have to go to our bedrooms, and we are not allowed to come down until after staff handover.' Another child was observed asking staff whether it was, 'OK to come downstairs for a drink.' These practices do not consider each child's views, wishes or feelings. Staff and the registered manager have failed to balance these actions against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare.

Children told the inspector that they are not allowed to access the internet, to have a mobile phone or to hold a Halloween party. This was confirmed by the registered manager and responsible individual, who stated that these things were against company

policy. This disadvantages children, because they do not have the opportunity to learn social skills, how to be safe using the internet or how to react in certain social occasions.

Placement plans are individualised, and provide a detailed account of how care should be provided. Plans include contributions from children, who are also encouraged to routinely attend review meetings. This ensures that children have an input into their care planning and reviews about their progress. However, the placement plans are not reviewed, nor are they updated to reflect any changes in a child's care needs and presentation. Therefore, plans remain the same for extended periods of time, and in some instances plans were the same as they were 12 months previously. This was rectified during the inspection.

Staff work hard to develop positive working relationships with birth families, and children benefit from seeing staff working well with their families. Social workers confirm that this is an area where staff excel. Children exercise their choice in terms of who they wish to see, in line with their individual plans. Staff facilitate contact both within and outside of the home, and are highly supportive of children's need to maintain relationships with those who are important to them. As a result, they enjoy improved relationships with their families.

Staff work closely and proactively with schools and promote the importance of education with children. As a result, all the children are achieving success in their education and make good progress from their starting points in attendance and attainment. The staff work closely with educational establishments to understand individual learning needs and provide the necessary support, for example one-to-one support to develop literacy, numeracy and the ability to tell the time or help with homework. This has helped some children to engage better in formal learning environments, as their confidence grows. However, the on-site learning support room is poorly equipped. There is no access to the internet, a computer or other technological devices that would support children with their learning.

On-site clinical services are readily available to the children throughout their two-year placement. If staff identify a concern with regard to a young person or request advice, clinical support is prompt. Detailed records are kept of the advice that is provided and the actions taken by staff in response to this advice. In addition, monthly restorative parenting recovery programme progress reports are shared with professionals and staff. Arrangements for the administration and storage of medication are sound.

A variety of activities based on the children's individual interests are arranged, such as trips to the swimming baths, go-karting and the local scouts. Like their peers, children enjoy playing on their games consoles or with Lego on building projects. However, unlike their peers, they are unable to do this in their bedrooms with the other children who live at the home. The deputy manager explained that staff would be unable to manage the risks if children spent any time together playing in their rooms. This was not supported by the risk assessments for individual children, and fails to accommodate children's wishes and feelings.

The children are involved in all day-to-day decisions about their daily lives, and have confidence that staff listen to them and will respond to any issues of concern that they may raise. They are supported to maintain friendships and family relationships which are important to them, and have made new appropriate friendships with their peers in the home. Due to their age, none of the children are currently undertaking formal preparation for independence plans, but all are encouraged to integrate fully into the usual activities of family life, such as laying the table, filling the dishwasher and cleaning the table after meals.

The accommodation provides generous living space. The decor, furniture, pictures and accessories generally create a homely atmosphere. There is some damage in three children's bedrooms. Plasterboard covers holes in the walls and window handles are missing. The radiator in the lounge is leaking and, despite several memos to the maintenance team, it remains not working as winter approaches. These failings could pose a hazardous risk to children's health.

Locks are fitted to all the communal doors, including the lounge and kitchen. Staff were observed asking the deputy manager to unlock the lounge door so that it could be cleaned. This is contrary to the ethos of the home. It is not detailed in the home's statement of purpose and the practice is not risk assessed.

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

The children feel safe and well supported by staff. Children believe that staff have their best interests at heart. They say that they are able to talk to any of the staff about anything which is worrying them, and that the staff sometimes nag them because they care.

Staff have no awareness of their duties under the government 'Prevent' strategy, having undertaken little or no training in this area. Staff and the registered manager have failed to support a child who is identified at risk of extremism. Additional action was taken by staff during the inspection when challenged by the inspector to safeguard the child in question. It is imperative that staff receive good-quality training which is regularly updated in order to manage risk effectively and robustly protect children.

Staff take appropriate timely action to promote the safety and well-being of children who go missing, and records provide an accurate picture of the actions taken by staff to safeguard children on these occasions. For example, records detail the actions that staff take to locate and contact the child, such as searching the area. There is strong evidence of the support that is offered to the child when they return. Professionals describe the staff as acting appropriately and being deeply caring individuals, who act appropriately and with due consideration of local protocols when children, including those with identified risks, go missing from the home.

Some behaviour strategies are making a positive difference to outcomes for children, while others are unclear and lack a sense of purpose. There have been periods when

children have clearly struggled, both individually and as a group, either going missing or damaging property. Systems for promoting positive behaviours and earning praise and rewards are embedded into the service. Other approaches are helping children to break antisocial behaviour cycles and behave responsibly. A professional said: 'He (a child) feels comfortable and safe within the home.' However, an indication of some staff practice was read in the report of a key-work session. The staff member wrote that the child's sanction is, 'No use of his television and that in future he will not ask staff if they can play with him and that, in future, staff will ask him or tell him they will play.' The staff member reiterated that 'if this occurs again, he will have no one-to-one time at all', and told the child 'he would not like that'. This approach fails to value children. It lacks a sense of nurturing, which is something that the organisation is keen to promote.

Physical intervention is used infrequently. The majority of staff have received suitable training and are clear on the thresholds for the use of physical intervention. However, the training of two staff has lapsed. Allowing staff to undertake physical interventions when they have not received up-to-date training in this potentially places children and others at risk of injury.

The selection and recruitment of staff procedures are rigorous and prevent unsuitable adults from being able to work with young people. Three allegations have been made by children relating to staff since the last inspection. Ofsted was notified of these events and, on one occasion, the registered manager concluded that staff practice had been poor during a restraint. An action was for the staff members to have additional training and supervision. However, this could not be evidenced during the inspection, despite several requests of the registered manager to do so. This limits the level of evaluation that can be made of actions taken by the manager when an allegation has been made.

Health and safety arrangements are well managed with regard to regular maintenance checks.

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

The leadership and management of the home are not yet good. The registered manager had been carrying out duties at another home for a number of months earlier in the year. A member of the senior team at the home did act up in the meantime and was supported by the registered manager. The home, therefore, did not experience consistent leadership and direction for an extended period of time. As a result, the home has not consistently been able to deliver the caring experience to children as set out in the statement of purpose.

The registered manager has failed to notify Ofsted about a complaint that they had received about the staff and care practice at the home. This was because the outcome of the investigation was for no further action to be taken. However, the regulator requires to be notified when any complaint is made about staff at the home, so that it is able to evaluate the action taken by the organisation to address third-party concerns.

The children receive good information about the service prior to admission, via the

children's guide and the welcome booklet. Good transition arrangements have helped the children to make good progress from their starting points. Their needs are consistently prioritised and they are very positive about their experiences.

The staff work effectively in partnership with children and partner agencies, one of whom described the home as the 'best home for working in partnership'. One professional wrote: 'Myself and all the staff have excellent communication, specifically with the key worker. Equally, the key worker is instrumental in maintaining communication between staff and school, as my child is educated off-site.'

The staff benefit from a wide-ranging training programme, which includes enhancing staff awareness around current issues such as safeguarding and fire awareness. However, the training has not been sufficiently targeted to meet the training and developmental needs of the staff at the home. For example, not all staff have undertaken training in radicalisation or for the Pillars of Parenting certificate, as listed in the statement of purpose, despite providing services to children who have needs that require staff to have this training.

Staff report that they feel well supported and know what their responsibilities are. However, individual supervision arrangements are not sufficiently frequent to support and challenge staff professionally and effectively. For example, one new member of staff has had only two supervisions in their four months of employment. All staff who have been working with children in a children's home for over two years have completed their level 3 diploma and all the remaining staff have been enrolled on a suitable course.

The provider was responsive to issues raised at this inspection, for example by quickly addressing the placement plans. The provider has met all of the requirements and recommendations set at the last inspection. However, quality assurance arrangements have not been of sufficient depth or breadth to give the provider clear insight into areas of concern at the home.

The positivity of the staff and their willingness to provide understanding and appropriate support to the children are the greatest strengths of the home. While a number of requirements and recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection, partner professionals and children remain positive about the support that they receive at this home. There is a demonstrated commitment and capacity to improve the quality of service by the registered manager and the staff team.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and children. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and children. They watched how professional staff work with children and children and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and children 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 children 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: 1229534

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Halliwell Homes Limited

Registered provider address: 1 Tape Street, Stoke-on-Trent ST10 1BB

Responsible individual: Karen Mitchell-Mellor

Registered manager: George Hudson

Inspector

Elaine Clare, social care inspector

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