

1240936

Registered provider: Meadows Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It is one of four operated under a contract with a large local authority. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children who may have experienced trauma, placement and family breakdown.

The organisation's clinical team provides a service to children and staff.

The home has been without a registered manager since June 2019. A manager is now in post and applying to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 September 2019

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: 7 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: Ofsted completed an interim inspection at the home on 7 March 2019. The inspector identified serious failings. At that time, children were not safe in the home because of poor arrangements to manage risks.

Following this interim inspection, Ofsted suspended the registration in respect of this home on 8 March 2019.

Ofsted monitored the home's compliance with the notice of suspension. The organisation took action to improve the service. The notice of suspension in respect of this home elapsed on 31 May 2019.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/03/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
23/05/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
02/11/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/06/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be 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>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; and use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff—</p> <p>provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(iv))</p>	29/11/2019
<p>The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff—</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; and</p> <p>help each child to express views, wishes and feelings. (Regulation 7 (1)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i)(ii))</p>	29/11/2019
<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>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous</p>	29/11/2019

improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(h))	
<p>The registered person must keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it. (Regulation 16 (3)(a))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that the statement of purpose accurately reflects the training available to staff.</p>	29/11/2019
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1)(2)(a)(b)(3)(d))</p>	29/11/2019

Recommendations

- Ensure that the children's home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of children, and is a homely, domestic environment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

Specifically, create welcoming and homely communal areas, help children to personalise their bedrooms and make sure children have suitable bedroom furniture as quickly as possible.

Inspection judgements

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

Managers make sure that children's case files include all necessary statutory information. Staff are aware of children's individual needs and vulnerabilities and use this information to produce internal support plans and risk assessments. However, they do not involve children in this process and their attempts to encourage children to read their plans are cursory and ineffectual. This means that children are unsure of the content of their internal plans and these documents do not include their views, opinions, comments or wishes. In addition, one child does not fully understand the reason why he is in residential care and another is not clear about his future plans. This does not help

children contribute to and understand decisions about their care.

Children enjoy positive relationships with staff. These relationships help them to talk about their backgrounds and previous experiences. Nevertheless, staff do not use this knowledge to shape the content of one-to-one key-work sessions that should form the basis of individualised care. These sessions are mostly general conversations and do not link to the aims or objectives of children's care plans. For example, there is a lack of specific work regarding children's relationships with others or helping them to understand their risks. This does not help children to make good progress in all areas of their development.

The home is spacious, including children's bedrooms. However, the walls in children's bedrooms are mostly bare, as are the vast corridor areas in the home. One child does not have suitable bedroom furniture. This detracts from the homeliness of the environment.

Managers and staff understand the importance of education. They work in partnership with schools, colleges and the placing authority to find children a suitable education provision that reflects their learning needs. When delays in this process mean that children are temporarily without a suitable placement, staff provide an enrichment timetable of learning activities. This helps children to maintain a daily routine that supports their reintegration into school.

Staff work with the organisation's clinical team to support children's mental and emotional health. Following a period of assessment, and if reflective of their needs, children benefit from quick access to tailored therapeutic support. This approach helps children to reflect on their experiences and better understand how these may influence their behaviours.

Children spend time in the local community with their friends. Although they are currently reluctant to engage, staff encourage them to join local clubs to expand their social circles, build new friendships and develop new interests.

Staff work with children's families, when appropriate, to ensure that children are not isolated from the people who are important to them. This gives children a sense of belonging and helps them to make positive choices about the people they want in their lives.

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

Staff recruitment is not always safe. The organisation does not consistently scrutinise information contained in application forms for all permanent staff. In addition, the verification of previous employment references is not always thorough. As a result, it is not always clear why staff have left previous employment or whether there were any safeguarding or disciplinary issues. In respect of agency staff, managers do not check the information provided by recruitment agencies to ensure that this meets regulation.

For example, agency records held by the organisation do not include information regarding any current or previous safeguarding or practice concerns. These shortfalls do not help to ensure that only suitable people work with children.

Managers make sure that children's risk assessments now include all known and potential risks, and that staff are aware of the content of these. Staff complete some general worksheets with children around risks such as bullying and internet safety. Although this project work helps children to start to take responsibility for their own safety, these lack the specific individual focus needed to help children recognise their own risks.

Staff manage children's behaviours well by using a balance of rewards and incentives. This approach encourages children to take responsibility for their own behaviours and means that the use of sanctions continues to reduce. When incidents occur, staff are quick to look at ways to defuse these situations. The emphasis on verbal de-escalation and distraction means that there have been no incidents of physical restraint since the home re-opened in June 2019.

Staff work with other agencies, such as local police teams and the designated officer for the local authority, to keep children safe. Staff complete child protection and safeguarding training. This helps them to understand their responsibility for keeping children safe and for reporting and recording any concerns they have about children's safety and welfare.

No complaints have been received about the service since the last inspection. Children told the inspector they know how to make a complaint. They said that the manager listens to their worries and quickly addresses issues. This reassures children that their concerns are taken seriously and escalated when necessary.

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

The registered manager left the home in May 2019. A new manager is now in post and has applied for registration. Ofsted is currently considering this application.

Since the last inspection, the organisation has made some improvements to internal monitoring systems. These now enable the manager to establish when staff complete tasks, and to audit the content of case files and have oversight of outstanding actions. However, these systems do not help the manager to review the quality of care. For example, she is aware of the number of key-work sessions staff complete but does not assess the quality of these, or consider if these support children's progress. This does not support the continual development of the service, because managers do not assess or evaluate links between the children's progress and the quality of care they receive.

Managers and staff work well with families and professionals. Partnership working is central to practice in the home. Social workers said that they are aware of the aims and objectives of the home and use this information to consider the suitability of this placement. Although the manager reviews the statement of purpose, this contains

incorrect information relating to training provided by external agencies. For example, a specialist external agency does not deliver sexual health awareness training to staff as stated in the statement of purpose. This is misleading to other professionals.

Staff receive regular practice-related supervision. This is a strength of the home and supports staff to reflect on their performance and learning needs, and consider the impact this may have on children's progress. The majority of staff hold suitable qualifications for their role, and internal training programmes help them to gain the additional skills that they may need to meet children's specific needs. This supports children's progress.

The manager is confident in challenging other professionals and agencies when their actions fall short of acceptable standards. This means that she successfully advocates for children to make sure that they can access the services and support that they need.

The organisation has taken sufficient action to address the four requirements made at the last inspection. These related to managing children's risks, staff induction programmes, partnership working with social workers to review children's care and making sure that staff work as a team to support children.

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 Limited

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

Responsible individual: Lara Elsegood

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Jo Stephenson, social care inspector

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