

# SC405985

Registered provider: ERA Care Limited 5921904

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is one of a small group run by an independent provider. The home is registered to provide care for up to three children aged between 11 and 18 who cannot live with their own families and require support and help to manage their emotions and behaviour.

The current, suitably qualified and experienced registered manager has been in post since August 2015.

**Inspection dates:** 2 to 3 December 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:** 18 July 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement    |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 18/07/2018      | Full            | Good                    |
| 21/06/2017      | Full            | Good                    |
| 20/12/2016      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness |
| 13/07/2016      | 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>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>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—</p> <p>ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—</p> <p>meet the needs of each child; and</p> <p>enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home.<br/>(Regulation 6(1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(i)(ii))</p> | 31/01/2020 |
| <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—</p> <p>that 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(1)(2)(d))</p>   | 30/12/2019 |
| <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—</p> <p>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>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p>   | 30/12/2019 |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(iv)(v))   |            |
| <p>For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained—</p> <p>the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ('the Level 3 Diploma'); or</p> <p>a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma.</p> <p>The relevant date is—</p> <p>in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1 April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or</p> <p>in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1 April 2014, 1 April 2016. (Regulation 32(4)(a)(b)(5)(a)(b))</p> | 31/03/2020 |

## Recommendations

- When children placed in a home are not participating in education, the child should be supported to sustain or regain their confidence in education and be engaged in suitable structured activities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- Regulation 23 requires the registered person to ensure that they make suitable arrangements to manage, administer and dispose of any medication. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
 

In particular, ensure that any member of staff who administers medication is suitably trained and assessed as competent to do so.
- 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)
 

In particular, request that the responsible local authority conducts a return home interview after each time a child goes missing.
- Ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair. ('Guide to the children's homes

regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)

In particular, ensure a suitable independent review of each record of restraint by someone who is senior to any staff involved in or witness to the incident.

- Ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Record information on individual children in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

## Inspection judgements

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

Shortfalls in help and protection and leadership and management mean that, despite the positive support that the children receive from the staff, the home has been judged overall as requires improvement to get to good.

The majority of staff undertake training in the administration of medication. However, there is no system to assess whether they are competent to administer medication. On one occasion, a staff who was not suitably trained or assessed as competent administered medication to a child.

None of the children attend school or college. The children are at the home together most of the time. This means that it is hard to engage the one child who has a reduced on-site education arrangement. The manager has advocated for suitable educational arrangements for the other children. The staff discuss the importance of education with the children and listen to their opinions. However, there is limited evidence of the work that the staff undertake with children on a day-to-day basis to get them education ready. Neither is there a consistently well-thought-out and structured approach to exploiting day-to-day activities to develop the children's literacy and numeracy skills.

The home delivers individualised care that meets the children's particular and complex needs. The children are positive about their experiences of life at this home. They said that it is 'calm' and 'blessed'. They enjoy the company of the house cat and sometimes benefit from its soothing presence.

The staff are aware of the children's health and emotional well-being needs. They help the children to talk through their anxieties or concerns. The manager links well with other agencies to ensure that the children receive the help and support that they need.

Although there are some shortfalls, most children do make individual progress in most areas of their lives. Levels of aggression, children going missing from the home and incidents of self-harm have reduced, and personal self-care skills are increasing. A parent said, 'They [the staff] are amazing with [the child]. He is a completely different child.' A social worker said, 'It's the most settled that [the child] has ever been.'

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

The banisters on the first-floor landing are not blocked off to full height. The children sit and play about on these banisters unchallenged by staff. During the inspection, two children were observed pretending to jump. A fall from this height could cause a child significant injury. A small unit in the lounge was broken with a large visible screw in one piece of wood. The unit was removed by staff when the inspector pointed out that this could be used as a potential weapon. Intumescent strips in some fire doors have some paint on them and, therefore, their effectiveness is reduced. The stair carpet is significantly frayed at the sides posing a potential tripping hazard. The manager has since advised that the fraying edges have been cut back.

Records are not consistently maintained with enough attention to detail. For example, records do not always document the actions taken by staff when children are found sleeping in a room together or when children have returned under the influence of cannabis.

The road to the local railway station is an unpaved, unlit, windy and busy country lane. There is a 'grab bag' for staff to use should a child go missing. This bag contains important equipment to keep the staff and children safe. However, not all staff know about the bag or where it is kept. Furthermore, the bag is not regularly checked, and one of the main pieces of equipment, a torch, was missing from the bag.

Risk-management plans do not provide consistently clear guidance for staff. One child's missing-from-care risk assessment does not provide clear guidance on when the child should be reported as missing. The risk assessment states that staff are to carry a mobile phone. However, the organisation does not provide the staff with a mobile phone. Staff are therefore expected to use a personal mobile phone. This is not consistent with good childcare practice.

There is no system in place to initiate a request to the relevant placing authority to carry out a return home interview when children have gone missing. As a result, few such interviews occur. This means that opportunities to understand patterns and trends or aspects of risk are potentially missed.

Some children, since the last inspection, have experienced peer-on-peer bullying at the home. Some children have been bullied and subsequently perpetrated bullying of other children. The staff have tried to address this with some success but have not always been alert to the issues. In recent months, one child was moved from the home because of allegations of bullying and the current group appears settled.

The staff understand that the children communicate their anxiety through behaviour. Staff seek to anticipate the children's needs and encourage positive communication to prevent situations escalating. Consequently, the current children's individual risk factors such as going missing, violence and vulnerability to criminal exploitation have reduced significantly.

The manager reviews the records of all incidents of physical restraint to ensure that the use is fair and proportionate. However, on one occasion, the manager was involved in a restraint, yet the record of this has not been reviewed by a person independent of the event to provide a suitably critical eye.

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

The manager has steered the home through a difficult period during which there have been many changes of staff. As a result, the manager has been highly involved in the childcare. She has a good knowledge of the children's individual needs and personalities. Consequently, she has built very positive relationships with the children who trust her and constantly seek her out to spend time with. However, this has potentially had some effect on her capacity to provide suitable managerial oversight of particular aspects of the home.

The home has sustained damage that has not been well repaired. Banisters are worn and door frames have sustained lots of damage. There is insufficient and frequently broken furniture in children's bedrooms. The staff have tried to make the lounge more attractive with cushions and a Christmas tree. However, a lounge sofa and chair have holes in them and paint spillage on them. The kitchen, while functional, is coming towards the end of its useful life. Consequently, particular areas of the home do not provide a cosy and inviting environment that promotes a sense of belonging and pride.

Most of the permanent staff have undertaken a variety of relevant training that promotes their confidence and competence. However, due to difficulties with training providers, two staff who have worked in a children's home for more than two years have yet to complete a relevant level 3 diploma in residential childcare.

The manager works closely with partner professionals such as the local police liaison officer and looked after children's nurse to better promote the children's outcomes. She actively challenges other professionals when she believes that they are not fulfilling their duties towards the children. Feedback from professionals and family members is positive. They cited the progress made by children and the difference that living at the home has made. One professional said, 'I can't enthuse enough how proactive the manager has been in advocating for the young person.'

## **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:** SC405985

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** ERA Care Limited 5921904

**Registered provider address:** Unit G22 Allen House, Station Road, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire CM21 9JX

**Responsible individual:** Stephen Milton

**Registered manager:** Hayley Roberts

## Inspector

Joanna Heller, social care inspector

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