

SC405985

Registered provider: ERA Care Limited

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 manager registered on 30 November 2020. This is the manager's first registered manager post.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 8 and 9 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 20 to 21 May 2021

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 2 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/12/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
18/07/2018	Full	Good
21/06/2017	Full	Good
20/12/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

The matching of children to others living in the home has been ineffective and led to significant incidents and placements ending. Three of the five young people who had lived at the home after September 2020 experienced unplanned moves. Although the staff are caring, they have not been able to consistently meet the young people's complex needs. One child was living at the home at the time of the inspection.

Young people's care and support plans are not sufficiently detailed to guide staff in providing effective and safe care. Consequently, the staff have not been fully aware of important routines, sensory needs and how a young person's autism spectrum disorder potentially affects their experiences and understanding of life. Although staff have received training in autism, this did not translate into autism-sensitive practice.

Behaviour management arrangements have been poor. This has placed young people, staff and the community at risk of harm.

The young people who recently lived at the home had not attended school or college. The young people had been at the home together most of the time and staff had not been able to successfully engage them in education in the home.

A young person was seen vaping, unchallenged by staff, throughout the two days of the inspection. The manager told the inspector that they would have expected staff to challenge this. However, there is no policy or guidance in place on the use of vaping materials at the home. As a result, the staff were not clear about the manager's expectations.

The home has sustained damage that has not been well repaired. There are broken and boarded-up windows in the lounge and education room because of recent damage caused by the young people. The interior of the fridge is broken and there are small holes in some fire doors. The chipboard wall erected on the first floor has been thinly painted over and not properly finished. Consequently, some areas of the home do not provide a cosy and inviting environment that promotes a sense of belonging and pride.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

The staff have been unable to prevent and manage the young people's escalating unwanted behaviours at the home and in the community. On occasion, the staff have not been able to prevent the young people threatening and assaulting each other at the home.

Sharp knives have not been securely stored. The young people accessed sharp knives through forced entry into the rooms where the knives were stored. It was known by managers and staff that one of these door locks was weakened due to being broken previously. Despite this, the storage requirements for sharp knives were not reviewed and clearly communicated to staff. As a result, the young people were again able to gain access to sharp knives on a further occasion. On both occasions, staff felt unsafe and locked themselves in areas of the home for their own protection while waiting for the police to arrive.

The managers' and staff's responses to incidents in the community have been ineffectual. The staff have not been able to manage the young people's behaviour, which, as a result, continued to escalate. There have been numerous police call-outs to manage the young people's behaviour. Failure to ensure that staff are equipped to manage behaviour and the group dynamics contributed to the young people's criminalisation and their placements ending at very short notice.

Managers have failed to identify and respond effectively to the escalating levels of risk. Consequently, the young people became unsafe in their own home. The location assessment does not reflect the known risks from community members and has not been updated with these increasing risks and risk-reduction measures.

Some fire doors have small holes in them. On occasion, young people have made fire balls using an aerosol can. The fire risk assessment has not been reviewed to understand the safety of the home in relation to these new risks and any risk-reduction measures that may be required.

The staff followed those children recently living at the home when they left the home without permission. However, one young person's placement was ended when the staff were unable to keep them safe. This young person had extremely high levels of going missing from the home and known risks of exploitation. The staff allowed the young person to leave the home without staff observation. The young person was missing from the home for several days within 24 hours of moving in. Despite the very high risks, the staff gave the young person money and the young person went missing again, for several days, when staff allowed them to leave the home without supervision.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The staff team is new and inexperienced. Only two staff out of seven have 12 months' or more experience. On most shifts, there has not been a staff member with 12 months' or more experience. The mix of staff on some shifts has meant that they have been ill-equipped to ensure the safety and well-being of children with complex behavioural needs.

Management monitoring is ineffective. Staffing arrangements have not been reviewed effectively to ensure that they continued to meet the needs of the children, who presented with increasingly complex behaviours. Incidents during the night have left staff tired and potentially less able to respond to the children's needs.

Managers have not sufficiently reflected on incidents to improve the security and safety of the young people and the staff.

Confidential records for previous residents have continued to be inappropriately stored despite young people accessing records through force. This has resulted in a serious data breach.

The staff have not always felt safe or well supported. They do not always receive debriefs after restraints and other distressing and significant events at the home. On one occasion, a staff member was asked to carry out a task that they were not experienced in managing, despite the staff member raising their concerns with the manager. One of the two staff who have worked at the home for over a year has not received an annual appraisal, despite twice being promoted into more senior roles. This means that the provider has not undertaken a full and transparent review of the staff member's strengths and areas for development.

The manager failed to notify Ofsted of relevant significant events. On three occasions, a young person with high levels of risk of exploitation was missing for an extended period. Ofsted, as the regulator, is unable to have a full understanding of the quality of safeguarding and the effectiveness of the care and support that young people receive if not notified of significant events at the home.

Failure to provide effective management oversight and support means that the day-to-day running of the home, including staff practice, is not reviewed and evaluated and shortfalls are not identified. Lack of knowledge of aspects of care that require improvement means that the manager is not able to address them.

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>understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>protect and promote each child's welfare;</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;</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. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iv)(c)(i)(ii))</p>	16 July 2021
<p>*The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p>	9 July 2021

<p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p> <p>positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;</p> <p>encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding;</p> <p>help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;</p> <p>communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding;</p> <p>de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(xi))</p> <p>In particular the registered person must:</p> <p>ensure that managers reflect on incidents and take effective action to reduce risks in the future;</p> <p>ensure that sharp knives are appropriately and securely stored and that all staff know the protocols on storage;</p> <p>ensure that staff are suitably equipped and able to prevent, manage and respond to difficult situations effectively and safely; and</p> <p>ensure that appropriate action is taken to address fractured community relationships and to respond to and resolve incidents in the community.</p>	
<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>16 July 2021</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>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>that the home’s day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm;</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)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(b)(d))</p> <p>In particular:</p> <p>ensure that the fire risk assessment and the suitability of the location assessment are consistently updated with new risks and any risk-reduction measures;</p> <p>repair the holes in the fire doors;</p> <p>ensure that children are prevented from harming each other and are safeguarded from adults and children who may harm them; and</p> <p>ensure that staff take suitable action to prevent children from going missing from the home and respond appropriately to these incidents when they occur.</p>	
<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—</p>	<p>9 July 2021</p>

<p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that:</p> <p>children receive care from an experienced, trained and skilled staff team;</p> <p>each shift has enough suitably skilled, trained and competent staff who can meet the needs of the children they are looking after and that arrangements for staffing overnight are safe and sufficient;</p> <p>staff are not required to undertake duties which are outside their competence and experience;</p> <p>management monitoring is effective;</p> <p>that incidents are appropriately reviewed to improve practice and that the review and any learning are recorded.</p>	
<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—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p>	<p>16 July 2021</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) (2)(h))</p>	
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home’s statement of purpose;</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>manage and review the placement of each child in the home;</p> <p>plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child’s placing authority; and</p> <p>that each child’s relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(ii)(iii)(c))</p>	<p>16 July 2021</p>
<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>16 July 2021</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>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child.</p> <p>Case records must be kept—</p> <p>securely in the children's home during the period when the child to whom the case records relate is accommodated there; and</p> <p>in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 36 (1)(a) (2)(c)(d))</p>	9 July 2021
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation;</p> <p>an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(e))</p>	16 July 2021

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children living at the home who are not in education are supported to sustain or regain their confidence in education and engaged in suitable structured activities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- The registered person should ensure that there are clear rules and guidance in place regarding vaping. Staff should have the skills and knowledge to help children to understand the dangers of vaping and help them to stop. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.18)

- The registered person should ensure that all staff have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. This appraisal should take into account, when reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and of children in the home's care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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

Registered provider address: Unit 3a, The Maltings, Station Road,
Sawbridgeworth CM21 9JX

Responsible individual: Miliano Mile

Registered manager: Stephanie Broderick-Fox

Inspector

Joanna Heller, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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