

SC005045

Registered provider: The Partnership of Care Today

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A large private provider operates this home. The home offers care for up to three children who have experienced childhood instability, resulting in trauma and associated complex behaviours.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since November 2014 and holds a level 4 qualification in leadership and management.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 November 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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: 16 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
15/11/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
05/12/2019	Full	Good
06/12/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

One child currently lives in the home. Since the last inspection, three children have moved in and two have moved out. Despite the current child making good progress, too many shortfalls identified at this inspection have affected the quality of children's care.

Leaders and managers do not assess each child's needs effectively before new children move into the home. Poor matching of children has impacted negatively on their experiences. For example, one child experienced disruption to their sleep and their behaviour deteriorated, and two children left the home earlier than expected. Managers have failed to sustain the improvements made since the full inspection in November 2021, when a requirement was raised for similar reasons.

Records accurately detail the needs of children in terms of their day-to-day care and how they need to be looked after. However, targets from children's reviews have not been added to the placement plans and are not tracked effectively. Children cannot easily understand their targets and goals because they are not clear and measurable. Children are not involved in planning aspects of their care. This is a barrier to children making progress and to children investing in their care.

Managers do not ensure that children have what they need to live comfortably in the home. The bathroom is cold and unwelcoming, with institutional-type flooring and signs. The garden is untended and unattractive. These shortfalls were raised at previous inspections.

Other areas of the home also have an institutional feel. There are fire exit signs and a no smoking sign and a fire extinguisher is in a prominent position at the top of the staircase. A large fireproof bag is attached to the letter box despite there being no known risk relating to this. Noticeboards and a large visible lock on a cupboard add to the institutional look of the home.

Staff develop positive relationships with the child. When the child returns from school, staff give him a warm welcome. They talk with the child while sharing a home-cooked evening meal around the kitchen table. Staff encourage the child's hobbies and interests, such as Scouts and swimming lessons, in the way a good parent would. The child also benefits from helping to care for the two pet cats. A social worker told the inspector that staff are positive about the child and show him warmth and nurture.

The child's health and well-being are promoted well by staff. Staff ensure that the child attends required medical appointments. Managers and staff advocate for him to have additional support when needed. They support the child during times of crisis and provide support to enable him to process difficult emotions.

The child attends school full time and is making progress. A teacher told the inspector that the child's relationship with staff was extremely positive and that 'he has no favourites, he loves them all'. The teacher said that the support of staff helped the child to have a positive move to secondary school.

Staff work hard to have a positive relationship with the child's family members. They have a good understanding of the family dynamics, and they support the child's relationships in line with his wishes.

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

Staff did not act to keep a child safe when there was a pattern of them going missing from home. Manager's reported the child missing to the police and engaged other agencies. However, staff failed to supervise the child adequately and did not use strategies to keep him safe. Consequently, the child was able to leave the home unchallenged and was placed at risk. This child no longer lives in the home.

Staff do not have sufficient information to safely supervise children and to manage their risks. Children's risk assessments are not personalised, and they lack a child-centred feel and do not give staff clear guidance about how to manage children's behaviours. For one child, agreements made with a child's social worker have not been included in their plans. The child's behaviours escalated, and they had to move out prematurely.

Managers' monitoring of incidents of restraint is not effective. For example, managers are not professionally curious when staff fail to record strategies used to de-escalate children's complex behaviours. They do not have sufficient information to assess if staff are protecting vulnerable children and if the measure used was necessary and proportionate. Additionally, records of debriefs with staff are not always available. Children and staff are not always spoken to by somebody who is independent of the restraint.

Staff help the child currently living in the home to feel safe and contained. Clear and predictable routines and boundaries help the child to know what is expected of him and he benefits from a consistent approach to his care.

Staff work hard to keep children safe by holding regular meetings and key-work sessions. They use online resources with children to discuss topics such as knife crime, child sexual exploitation and self-harming behaviours. This approach enhances children's feelings of safety and security.

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

The home has a registered manager and a deputy manager. The registered manager has worked at the home for 12 years and has been a consistent presence in the lives of children. The registered manager has good partnership working with

others, including family members and social workers. The current child benefits from this tailored support, which has a positive impact on their progress. Despite these positive aspects, leaders and managers are not yet providing children with consistently good-quality care.

Although staff have received face-to-face training in first aid, medication and safeguarding children, managers have failed to ensure that staff have received training to meet the current child's needs. This has left staff without the skills to understand the child's risks and how to manage them.

Managers fail to provide care in line with the statement of purpose. Staff do not receive training in the organisation-approved therapeutic model of care as stated in the home's statement of purpose.

Managers ensure that staff receive regular supervision and an annual appraisal. New staff receive more regular supervision and are promptly enrolled on the level 3 qualification. However, some supervisions are only recorded in brief and safeguarding is not regularly discussed. Additionally, the manager's development needs are not understood as she has not received an appraisal.

The home has a team of well-qualified staff. Six of the seven staff have a level 3 qualification. Managers and staff have worked hard to ensure that children have consistent care. When necessary, staff and managers quickly pick up any shortfalls in the rota. This means that children build trusted relationships with known adults who care for them.

Staff say they like working in the home and that morale is good. They say the home is well run and they value the support they receive from the manager. Recently, the home's sister home closed and the staff teams merged. Staff say that this move was well managed, and that staff enjoy working together as a team.

The manager continuously reviews the quality of care that children receive. She submits detailed reports to the regulator and sets targets to ensure ongoing improvements. However, the manager did not conduct a review following two children leaving in an unplanned way. This was a missed opportunity for managers and staff and the wider organisation to learn lessons and potentially improve practice.

The manager has submitted an up-to-date version of the home's statement of purpose. However, this does not contain sufficient detail in relation to the health professionals providing therapeutic support to children. This shortfall prevents the regulator and professionals from having clear and up-to-date information on the support received by children.

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>provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(ii)(iii)(vii))</p> <p>This specifically relates to managers ensuring that the flooring in the bathroom is replaced and the bathroom updated. Also, that the garden is maintained.</p>	8 January 2023
<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>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare.</p>	8 January 2023

<p>(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(vi))</p> <p>This specifically relates to managers ensuring that risk assessments contain guidance to staff to keep children safe. Additionally, that staff receive training relating to children's high-risk behaviours.</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>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>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(h))</p> <p>This specifically relates to leaders and managers ensuring that staff care for children in line with the statement of purpose and that managers use monitoring systems effectively to evaluate children's progress.</p>	<p>8 January 2023</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 each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to managers ensuring that they fully consider children's needs prior to them moving into the</p>	<p>8 January 2023</p>

home. Additionally, managers should ensure that children's plans contain all relevant information.	
<p>Restraint in relation to a child is only permitted for the purpose of preventing—</p> <p>injury to any person (including the child);</p> <p>serious damage to the property of any person (including the child); or</p> <p>a child who is accommodated in a secure children's home from absconding from the home.</p> <p>Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2))</p> <p>This specifically relates to managers ensuring that records of restraint contain enough information to assess if the measure used was necessary and proportionate.</p>	8 January 2023
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to managers ensuring that the registered manager receives an annual appraisal.</p>	8 January 2023
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;</p> <p>within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and</p> <p>has signed the record to confirm it is accurate.</p>	8 January 2023

<p>(Regulation 35 (3)(a)(v)(b)(i)(ii))</p> <p>This specifically relates to managers ensuring that records include how staff de-escalate children's behaviours and that the records of incidents of restraint include managers' debriefs with staff.</p>	
<p>The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ('the statement of purpose') which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the fact that details of the supervision received by the home's clinician are not recorded in the statement of purpose.</p>	<p>8 January 2023</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meet the needs of their children; it will, in most cases, be a homely, domestic environment. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislation (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that supervision of staff supports them to engage in the safeguarding culture of the home so they understand what they would need to do if they found other staff misusing or abusing their position to the detriment of the safety of a child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.14)
- The registered person should ensure that staff encourage children to see the home's records as living documents, supporting them to view and contribute to the record in a way that reflects their voice on a regular basis. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.19)

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: SC005045

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: The Partnership of Care Today

Registered provider address: 2nd Floor, Lansdowne House, 85 Buxton Road,
Stockport, Cheshire SK2 6LR

Responsible individual: Vivien Snape

Registered manager: Emma Coen

Inspectors

Karen Gillingwater, Social Care Inspector
Carl Wilton, Social Care Inspector

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