

1249183

Registered provider: Horizon Care And Education Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is a privately run children's home. It provides care and accommodation for up to four children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 18 to 19 July 2017

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

Date of last inspection: This is the home's first inspection

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is inadequate because

- There is little progress in the attendance and attainment of young people in

education. One young person has moved to the home with no educational provision in place.

- Safeguarding practice does not protect young people sufficiently. Staff do not recognise when young people may be at risk. Risk assessments are generic in nature and do not reflect young people's individual vulnerabilities.
- Behaviour management is poor and fails to address unacceptable behaviour. There are no clear behaviour management strategies and therefore young people respond negatively to any attempts by staff to provide safe boundaries.
- Staff from other homes are frequently covering shifts. This is resulting in young people experiencing inconsistencies in their day-to-day lives and a failure to develop trusting and stable relationships with staff.
- The impact of new young people on others living in the home and the ability of staff to manage the level of need has not been assessed prior to placement. This has resulted in destabilisation of other residents and an inability of staff to meet young people's needs.
- Staff are unclear about the contact arrangements between young people and their families. As a consequence, some young people could be placed at risk through lack of supervision.

The children's home's strengths

- Staff are providing support to one young person to challenge the decisions made by his placing authority.
- Senior management recognise that there are serious shortfalls in practice and had started to take steps to address these issues prior to the inspection.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard (1) The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— (a) develop positive relationships with them; (b) engage with them; and (c) take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.	11/08/2017
8: The education standard (1) The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. and (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (iii) understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; (v) promote opportunities for each child to learn informally.	11/08/2017
11: The positive relationships standard (1) The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— (b) an understanding about acceptable behaviour. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (i) meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; (ii) help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; (iii) encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding.	11/08/2017

12: The protection of children standard (1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure– (a) that staff– (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; (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe; (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; (iv) manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare; and (vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies; (a) 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. *	11/08/2017
13: The leadership and management standard (1) The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that– (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to– (a) 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; (b) ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; (e) ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child; (f) 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.	11/08/2017
14: The care planning standard (1) The care planning standard is that children– (a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and (b) have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from	11/08/2017

the home. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure– (b) that arrangements are in place to– (i) ensure the effective induction of each child into the home. (d) that, subject to regulation 22 (contact and access to communications), contact between each child and the child’s parents, relatives and friends, is promoted in accordance with the child’s relevant plans.	
33: Employment of staff (1) The registered person must– (a) ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction.	11/08/2017

* These requirements are subject of a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- 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)
- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child’s assessed needs as recorded in the child’s relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

One young person has been admitted to the home with no educational provision in place. Staff are not engaging him in any meaningful activities, and as a result he is spending the majority of the day in bed. Other young people only attend education for a few hours each week. Staff are not providing them with educational outings and activities as documented in their care plans, nor are they challenging educational authorities sufficiently in order to resolve this. As a result, young people are not making progress and their behaviour is deteriorating.

Young people who are new to the home are not introduced in a sensitive manner. Admissions are rushed and there is no planned introduction between young people. As a result, young people have not developed a sense of belonging within the home or community. One new young person stated: 'I had no choice about coming here. I have never been to this city before; there is nothing here.'

The staff team lacks knowledge and confidence and is failing to build positive relationships with young people. Staff team members are unable to put consistent boundaries in place or earn the respect of the young people. The acting manager commented that a number of staff feel intimidated by young people and that it is the young people who are in charge. This is reflected in the occurrence of incidents of verbal and physical aggression and damage to the home.

Because staff lack expertise, young people often refuse to participate in activities, both in and out of the home, preferring to socialise with their peers, whom they barely know, in the local community. Young people have a lot of unsupervised time; staff are not aware of where young people are and what they are doing. They place too much trust in the young people's ability to adhere to contact and pick-up arrangements, with the consequence that young people are often missing late into the night and sometimes overnight in unknown locations. One young person described the home as 'chaos'. He said: 'no one knew what was going on', and that there was 'nothing to do'.

Arrangements have been made to address some of the health needs of the young people. Some of them are receiving therapeutic assessments and a therapist has offered some guidance to staff in handling the behaviours being exhibited. Staff are also helping one young person to complain to his placing authority as he wants to move back to his local area. He is also supported by a children's rights organisation.

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

Three young people have been admitted to the home within a short timeframe. The manager failed to adequately assess and understand the risks associated with these young people. The impact assessments were completed, but were not individualised, and did not give a true reflection of the identified risks and needs associated with each young person. One young person's behaviour significantly deteriorated. Following the placement of another young person and according to the acting manager: 'There has been a decline in X's (young person) behaviour since the most recent admission. Staff are not strong enough to put boundaries in place.'

While young people have had their risks assessed and this has informed planning documentation, there are no specific plans in place to reduce the risk of harm. Staff know the vulnerabilities of the young people, but they do not take proactive measures to protect them. For example, one young person is dropped off by staff in an adjacent town and picked up several hours later, late in the evening. Staff have no idea of the addresses he is frequenting. This is despite a previous history of risk-taking behaviour. Another young person who is very new to the area is being dropped off in the city centre by staff and has very quickly progressed to being missing from home overnight.

While some of these arrangements have been sanctioned by placing authorities, staff are not escalating their concerns appropriately or forcefully enough in the interests of keeping young people safe.

Staff do not adequately understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children. They are uncertain of the conditions of contact between young people and their families, letting contact go ahead based on unconfirmed information. This is leaving young people at risk of harm through lack of appropriate supervision.

Young people have individual missing from home plans in place. Staff follow protocols, but the number of incidents of missing from home is increasing for some young people, and the recording of such incidents is variable. Staff do not have the addresses of family members or friends where young people may go. Plans are not robust enough. One member of staff did not have an acceptable knowledge of safeguarding procedures, such as return home interviews. The day-to-day care of young people is not being delivered so as to keep each young person safe from harm.

Young people think that they can keep themselves safe. As a result, relationships with staff are superficial and there is no significant engagement. Young people do not receive help and support to manage their behaviour. Staff do not respond with clear boundaries about what is safe and acceptable. This is resulting in incidents of verbal and physical aggression, damage to the home and physical restraint.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager has managed the home since April 2017. His ineffective leadership and management of the home have resulted in the young people's safety and overall needs being compromised. Staff have felt unsupported; a recording in team meeting minutes states that: 'It was unclear what we had to do each day, we were unsure of day-to-day tasks and shift planning.'

Staff induction has not been completed by the manager and there have been shortfalls in the supervisory process. The manager has not shared or discussed key information, resulting in staff feeling ill-equipped to manage the complex behaviours exhibited by the young people. A member of staff expressed concerns stating: 'I feel as if we are failing these young people; they are being let down, as no structure or boundaries are in place. I have worked with some really challenging young people and achieved good outcomes for them. I have not been shown what to do. I know that I am good at my job, but haven't had the chance to put good practice in place.'

There has been no systematic managerial oversight in respect of young people's placements and educational provision and staff record-keeping lacks detail and analysis. Young people's participation in their care and behaviour management plans is lacking. As a result, little or no progress is being made, due to an absence of ownership and consultation with the young person. As one young person said: 'I didn't know I was coming here and was only told on the day. I didn't get to visit the home first.' For

another young person, when asked if he had been to a mosque, he replied: 'I don't know where it is. I would like to know as I am a Muslim.' It is only since the acting manager has been in post that some emphasis has been placed on ascertaining the wishes and feelings of the young person.

The acting manager has begun to address some of the deficits and implement processes and procedures that underpin safe practices, such as missing from care protocols. However, the enormity of the task, alongside having to crisis-manage the day-to-day activities and needs of the young people, has seen the acting manager making a decision to step down from this role.

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 difference 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 who 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: 1249183

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Horizon Care And Education Group Limited

Registered provider address: Venture House, Unit 12, Prospect Business Park,
Longford Road, Cannock WS11 0LG

Responsible individual: Graeme Cheyne

Registered manager: Robert Bamling

Inspectors

Cath Sikakana, social care inspector
Janet Black, social care inspector

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