

1256134

Registered provider: Roc Northwest Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The children's home is one of a number of homes operated by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 31 October to 1 November 2017

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:

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- Young people experience inconsistent support and care as the turnover of management and staff is high.
- When young people go missing, they do not always have an independent return home interview.
- Young people's case records do not always contain sufficient detail to ensure that the reader can establish what action has been taken following any significant events. Language used in records is sometimes ambiguous, and it is not always clear who has completed the records as staff do not print and sign all documents.
- Young people's bedrooms do not always provide a warm, comfortable space for them to relax and unwind as broken furniture, such as a bedroom wardrobe door, is left unrepaired following a significant incident.
- Allegation management is not robust. One incident had not been investigated promptly by the relevant safeguarding agencies as the provider had failed to share details of the incident in the appropriate timescales. The provider had also failed to notify Ofsted, in line with regulation.
- Staff do not undertake direct work with young people to support them to gain an understanding of how to keep themselves safe from the known risks associated with the local area. Examples include the risks associated with living on the main road, and those linked to the stone quarry across the road.
- Young people's risk management plans do not clearly identify how the staff will support, manage, supervise and monitor young people to ensure that they are safeguarded from the known risks within the local area, such as the stone quarry.
- The manager has failed to review young people's consequence records to ensure that the use of consequences is fair and effective.

The children's home's strengths:

- Young people are positive about the quality of care and feel that staff are interested in and concerned about their welfare. They have positive relationships with their key workers and feel able to express themselves in an assertive manner.
- Young people benefit from regular and positive contact with family members and those significant in their lives. They reported feeling happy with the level of contact.
- Staff provide good opportunities in terms of activities and building self-esteem. They listen to the views of the young people and encourage positive choices.
- Safe recruitment practice is followed, and new staff receive sufficient support

and monitoring, which ensures that young people's safety and welfare is promoted.

- Effective independent scrutiny and challenge from the independent visitor ensures that any areas for development or shortfalls are highlighted quickly.
- The new manager has a good understanding of the areas for development, and has a realistic plan in place to ensure that ongoing improvements can be made in this home.

Recent inspection history

There have been no previous inspections of this children's home.

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
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered provider must ensure that — (2)(a)(vi) staff take effective action wherever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. This is with particular regard to ensuring that young people's views are listened to and acted upon when they raise their concerns regarding the practice of the staff. These concerns should be shared with the young people's placing local authority and safeguarding agencies within the required timescales so that the necessary investigations can be undertaken.	30/11/2017
12.— The protection of children standard (1) In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered person must ensure that children are protected from harm. (2) In particular, the standard requires the registered person to ensure that— (b) 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. This is with particular regard to ensuring that the risk management plans clearly identify how the staff will support, manage, supervise and monitor young people to ensure that they are safeguarded from the known risks within the local area, such as the stone quarry.	30/11/2017
13.— The leadership and management standard (1) In order to meet the leadership and management standard	30/11/2017

the registered person must enable, inspire and lead 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— (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child.	
The registered manager must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control or discipline in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(vii))	30/11/2017
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is an incident requiring police involvement which the registered person considers to be serious, or there is any other incident relating to the child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(4)(b)(e))	30/11/2017

Recommendations

- The missing from home return interview should be carried out within 72 hours of the child returning to their home or care setting. This should be an in-depth interview and is normally best carried out by an independent person (i.e., someone not involved in caring for the child), who is trained to carry out these interviews and is able to follow up any actions that emerge. ('Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care', page 14, paragraph 32)
- Provide a homely environment. In particular, ensure that the home is well maintained and decorated, and that any repairs to young people's bedroom furniture, such as their wardrobes, are carried out quickly, or that the furniture is replaced. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- Staff should support young people to be aware of and manage their own safety both inside and outside the home to the extent that any good parent would. Staff should help young people to understand how to protect themselves, feel protected, and be protected from significant harm. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.9)

In particular, ensure that the staff complete meaningful direct work with young people which enables them to understand how to keep themselves safe from the known risks in the local area, such as risks associated with living on the main road and those linked with the stone quarry across the road.

- All children's case records must be kept up-to-date and signed, printed and dated by the author. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Information about the child should always be recorded 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)
- The home's record of an incident or event must include a description of the action taken and the outcome of any resulting investigation. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.14)

Inspection judgements

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

The home was registered on 7 June 2017. Since this time, the home has experienced an unsettled period. There have been four changes to the leadership and management team, and a number of staff changes. This has impacted on the young people receiving consistent, well-managed and well-thought-out care. Staff issues, alongside the placement of one young person who exhibited challenging and often risky behaviour such as high numbers of missing-from-home episodes, intimidating behaviour and physical aggression, impacted on young people's safety and well-being, and exposed them to increased levels of risk. This ultimately impacted on some young people's ability to make and sustain any positive progress, and resulted in one young person moving on from the home prematurely.

There have been inconsistencies within the staff team due to managers and staff joining and leaving the home. This has resulted in the regular use of agency workers and staff from other homes to cover shifts. Efforts have been made to alleviate the impact of staffing shortfalls. However, over time this cannot fail to impact on young people's sense of security and belonging. More positively, young people benefit from good relationships with core staff who provide care that is genuine, and that is centred around the young people's individual needs. The core staff team works hard to build relationships, and young people say that they can approach staff at any time. Young people are positive about the quality of care and feel that staff are interested and concerned about their welfare.

Young people say that staff listen to them. They have positive relationships with their key workers and feel able to express themselves in an assertive manner. Young people

have confidence that their views are respected and acted on. They have regular young people's meetings where weekly menus and activities are identified. The menus and activity planners are amended accordingly to meet young people's changing wants and needs. An advocate also visits on a monthly basis and offers young people an alternative avenue to express themselves. This enables the young people to feel valued and listened to, and helps to increase their confidence and self-esteem.

Young people benefit from regular and positive contact with family members and those who are important to them. They reported feeling happy with the levels of contact. Staff facilitate and support increased contact plans to enable the young people to spend increasing amounts of time with their families, so that they can work towards their aims of returning to the environment of their choice. Furthermore, staff are quick to respond when difficulties arise during contact, and intervene to ensure that young people are safe and families feel supported. This enables the families to repair and rebuild difficult relationships in a safe and supported way.

Education opportunities for young people are improving. Some positive and effective working relationships between care staff and education staff ensure that some young people access an education provision that is suitable for their needs. This is enabling them to make good educational progress. The new manager values education for all young people. She has suitable plans in place to ensure that those who do not yet have an education place identified will have one soon. Furthermore, educational activities, such as online learning, educational outings, and increased involvement in promoting and developing independent living skills, ensure that young people continue to make some progress from their individual starting points.

Young people and professionals confirm that staff work hard to encourage and promote positive childhood experiences for young people. Young people engage in a range of activities such as walking, trampolining and swimming, as well as enjoying trips out to the cinema, shopping centres and activity parks. Staff support young people to enjoy in-house activities, and spend time playing on games consoles or planning activities or parties, such as Halloween and birthday parties. This support provides the young people with opportunities to gain new experiences, enhance their skills and enjoy their time in this home.

Young people enjoy regular family mealtimes and evening meals with the staff. Staff sit with young people around the dining table, and initiate discussions and plan activities with them. The home environment is steadily improving. The service has an ongoing repairs and maintenance programme. Some redecoration and repair work has been undertaken. However, further work is required, such as replacing broken wardrobe doors in young people's bedrooms, to ensure that young people have a warm, welcoming, and calming personal space.

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

Missing from home has been a worrying feature in this home. One young person was

going missing from home with increasing frequency for extended periods of time, and enabling another young person to join them. Since the departure of one young person, the missing-from-home episodes have ceased. Records indicate that when young people are reported missing, staff implement the missing-from-care policy and protocols. This means that staff take prompt action to identify the whereabouts of young people. However, there were no records to clarify that, on their return, young people have been given the opportunity to take part in an independent return interview. This signifies a missed opportunity to understand young people's missing-from-home behaviour, to inform further risk management planning.

Young people's safety is compromised as the processes for managing allegations are insufficient. Although the manager ensures that young people's complaints are listened to, the previous manager had not systematically and appropriately followed up a concern with the placing authority, nor had he informed Ofsted in a timely manner. This compromises young people's safety, and hinders professionals from carrying out their safeguarding responsibilities effectively to ensure that young people are safeguarded. That said, the new manager has now addressed this concern after being made aware of it by the independent visitor.

The provider responds to complaints against the home quickly and effectively. When concerns were raised regarding the location of the property and the possible impact this may have on the safety of young people, the provider responded sufficiently by securing the perimeter of the property. However, the provider has missed an opportunity to promote young people's safety further. No direct work has been carried out with the young people around the specific risks associated with this home, such as living on a very busy main road and the dangers of accessing the stone quarry. This is because there has been insufficient consistent management oversight to ensure that this work is undertaken. Furthermore, although young people's risk management plans are detailed and clear, and offer staff suitable guidance on how they must support young people in times of crisis, these risk assessments do not identify how staff will keep young people safe from the potential risks associated with the stone quarry. This has the potential to impact on the safety and well-being of young people.

Staff are trained in the use of physical restraint, and understand that this is only used when absolutely necessary. The use of physical restraint is managed and recorded adequately. Young people are given the opportunity to discuss their experiences of these situations, and staff reflect on the events and actions to develop their care practice. Although management oversight is evident within the records, it is not always clear who has reviewed and evaluated the records as signatures are illegible. Furthermore, there are no clear outcomes recorded by the manager as to what actions have been taken when young people raise concerns, or when shortfalls have been identified.

Staff make use of incentive systems to promote more socially acceptable behaviours. Young people contribute to their plans, and their accomplishments are celebrated and rewarded. Young people receive regular verbal praise and encouragement for their achievements, which reinforces more positive behaviour. This, and the additional activities and monies that are on offer to encourage young people to make more

positive, safe and socially acceptable choices, have supported some young people in making good steps forward in improving their behaviour.

The recruitment, selection, training and monitoring process for new staff is thorough and effective in keeping young people safe, as safe recruitment practice is followed. New staff are trained, supported, and monitored well to ensure that they can provide a good level of safe care to young people. These staff are familiar with their safeguarding roles and responsibilities, and speak confidently about the home's whistle-blowing policy. Furthermore, staff complete regular health and safety checks on fire, electrical and gas equipment. This practice keeps everyone safe within the home.

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

The management and leadership of this home has been inconsistent and ineffective. The registered manager left his post on 4 September 2017. Since this time, two other managers have been appointed to take over the leadership of the home. Both have since moved on, and a fourth manager is now in post. The lack of consistent management has resulted in poor and ineffective oversight of young people's care planning. For example, there has been no management oversight of sanction records and physical interventions, and there has been no attempt to ensure that ongoing developments in the home are undertaken.

Leaders and managers have failed to record incidents of concern appropriately. For example, a significant event involving an assault on a member of staff by a young person has not been recorded with sufficient detail. The record viewed offered no information about the subsequent action taken, and the outcome. This means that staff were unable to provide the inspector with a clear and accurate account of the present situation.

Good external monitoring identifies shortfalls and areas for improvement. However, the lack of a consistent manager has prevented some of these actions being completed in a timely manner.

The statement of purpose and children's guide provide good information about the home's aims and objectives for young people, their families, and placing authorities. This ensures that stakeholders are clear about what service they can expect to receive.

Professionals are generally complimentary about the level of care and support that young people receive. They confirm that some young people make progress in this home, with a reduced number of missing-from-home incidents, improved behaviour management, and improved educational outcomes. When the management team has identified that it is no longer in a position to maintain young people's placements safely, the manager appropriately requests the required meetings to ensure that young people can be moved on from the home in a safe and managed way.

Although there have been some difficulties with the staffing arrangements for this home, a new manager and deputy manager, who both hold the required childcare qualifications and have the knowledge and experience to perform their roles well, have recently

started in their roles. This, alongside the recruitment of new permanent staff members, will enable young people to receive consistent care and support. The majority of recently recruited care staff are new to this particular role. Although these staff do not have the recognised qualifications, they do bring enthusiasm, motivation and a commitment to improve the experience and progress for young people. Staff feel well supported by the manager, and there is evidence to confirm that this is the case. Core staff receive suitable training, and improved supervision arrangements ensure that staff are able to fulfil their role to the best of their ability.

The new manager and the senior leadership team are aware of the difficulties the home has faced since it opened. The management team is aware of the improvements which are required, and the new manager has set out how she intends to address these within her updated and reviewed development plan. This enables the manager and staff to focus appropriate time and support in areas of weakness, to ensure that improvements are made.

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: 1256134

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Roc Northwest Ltd

Registered provider address: 41 Silverdale Road, Arnside, Carnforth LA5 0AL

Responsible individual: Katie Stephens

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Janine Shortman-Thomas, social care inspector

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