

1264537

Registered provider: Roc Northwest Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to accommodate five children, irrespective of gender, between the ages of 10 and 18. The home offers emergency, short- and long-term placements for children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 27 to 28 February 2018

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: not applicable

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:

- Staff do not always follow young people's risk assessments comprehensively to ensure that they protect children when they are away from the home. As a result, children have been subject to significant harm while missing from care.
- Risk assessments are not sufficiently clear or robust to reflect the changes in risks for children. This means that staff may not be working to protect children from emerging or increasing risks.
- From the point of accepting a referral, senior managers do not recognise changes in circumstances within the home which may impact on the well-being of other children moving into the home.
- Relevant and critical information has not been shared by the placing authority or sought from the care staff. This significantly compromises the home's ability to meet the needs of children.
- Staff recruitment practice is not always sufficiently robust.
- Staff are not always provided with suitable training that reflects the needs of the children accommodated. In particular, training around child sexual exploitation.
- Poor-quality record-keeping means that paperwork has been copied and pasted from one child's records to another, demonstrating a total lack of regard for individualised care.

The children's home's strengths:

- Children say that the staff look after them. Staff know children well and respond to their needs sensitively. Children are able to talk about their worries and concerns.
- Children have made some progress from their starting points. They are encouraged to engage in activities that help them to understand the importance of continued progress. When things go wrong, staff help them to understand what they need to do to keep themselves safe and to help them find more positive ways of expressing themselves.
- The newly appointed manager is highly committed, and has the skills and experience to address the shortfalls identified in this inspection.
- The permanent staff team members are supportive of the manager and of each other. They are clearly aware of the need for consistency and stability for vulnerable children and have worked together through a challenging period at the home. Staff use supervision reflectively and feel able to voice their concerns openly.
- The provider recognises, and intends to address, shortfalls in training around

child sexual exploitation.

- External professionals and important people in children's lives report that children have made progress as a result of the care that they receive at the home. They state that communication is good and that staff ensure that all significant incidents are reported and responded to appropriately.
- Adequate external monitoring supports the manager to identify strengths and areas for development.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
N/A		

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, with particular reference to children who go missing from care and food safety, the registered person must ensure that: (2)(a)(i)(v) staff understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person and 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. In particular, evidence that suitable actions are taken by staff to prevent children going missing and subsequent appropriate action to promote their welfare.	31/03/2018
The registered person must ensure— that staff 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. (Regulation 12 (2)(a)) In particular, risk assessments must be completed or reviewed and updated to consider emerging or increasing levels of risk.	31/03/2018
The registered person must ensure— 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. (Regulation 12 (2)(b)) Specifically, staff should follow risk assessments and procedures to ensure that children are kept safe both inside and outside of the home when meeting friends and associates and that all measures are taken to gain information that will support protection of the child.	31/03/2018
13: The leadership and management standard	31/03/2018

To meet the standard requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (2)(c)) Specifically, staff should have the training around the needs of the children that are accommodated.	
14: The care planning standard The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b))	31/03/2018

Recommendations

- Ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8). In particular, ensure that all staff receive suitable training around child sexual exploitation.
- Ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4). Specifically, that staff accurately record in risk assessments and missing from home plans the actions that they take and the decisions that they make to safeguard children where necessary.
- As set out in Regulations 31–33, the registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1). In particular, ensure that previous employer references are obtained from organisations rather than from ex-work colleagues.

Inspection judgements

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

Although some aspects of the direct care provided to young people are good, issues in relation to safeguarding, leadership and management undermine the ability of the home as a whole to provide a good quality of care.

On occasion, poor placement planning has resulted in admitting children whose specific

care needs could not be managed by the staff team and this has led to children suffering significant harm. However, the newly appointed manager and her deputy have taken stock and during the inspection have made a decision, ensuring that the home can meet the needs of any future admissions. They have satisfied themselves that the mix of children in the home is suitable and promotes the development of the group.

The home has experienced challenges in liaising with placing authorities around the safeguarding plans for children. Although information has not been fully shared by the placing authority, the manager at the home has not sought further information from previous placements either. This lack of information sharing and gathering has resulted in a child coming to significant harm.

Children develop positive relationships with the staff, who they trust. Staff support children with their emotional well-being, and engage children well with activities as a distraction to what has been happening in the home. This has provided children with a sense of achievement as they were able to make a contribution to charity. One child spoke about her plans to run a charity event at the home and how she had been round to local businesses asking for donations. Throughout the inspection, warm and supportive relationships were observed between the children and staff, who responded sensitively to children's presenting behaviour.

As a result of these positive relationships, most children currently placed make personal progress in areas such as their personal appearance, behaviour and educational engagement. The children recognise this themselves, and are proud of their achievements and as a result benefit from improved self-esteem.

The children are in good health and receive suitable guidance from staff on maintaining healthy lifestyles. Some children, despite the support and guidance provided by staff, continue to engage in unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, alcohol misuse and, on occasion, using cannabis.

Staff are proactive, and work closely with schools to promote the importance of education with young people. As a result, all of the children have had success in education, making progress from their starting points in attendance or attainment. All apart from one very newly placed child have suitable educational arrangements in place.

A variety of activities based on the children's individual interests are arranged, such as trips to the cinema, shopping, trampolining and attending the gym. However, like their peers, they also enjoy playing on their games consoles, and meeting up and spending time with their friends in the locality.

The children are involved in all day-to-day decisions about their daily lives, and have confidence that staff listen to them and will respond to any issues of concern that they may raise. Children are supported to maintain friendships and family relationships that are important to them and have made new, appropriate friendships with their peers in

the home. No young people are currently undertaking formal preparation for independence plans, but all are encouraged to integrate fully into the usual activities of family life, such as shopping, cooking and taking responsibility for their laundry.

The accommodation provides a generous living space, with the decor, furniture, pictures and accessories providing a homely atmosphere.

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

The children feel safe and well supported by staff, who they believe have their best interests at heart. Young people say that they are able to talk to any of the staff about anything that is worrying them, and that staff sometimes nag them because they care.

Staff have a suitable awareness of safeguarding. However, only three members of staff have undertaken training around child sexual exploitation despite the home supporting children with identified high levels of risk in this area. It is imperative that staff receive good-quality training that is regularly updated in order to manage risk effectively and that informs staff about how to protect children robustly.

The actions that staff take to promote the safety and well-being of children who go missing from the home are poor. For example, staff failed to ensure that a child was taken safely to an arranged contact session in another city in the region. Instead, they decided to send the child by train alone. The child subsequently went missing and came to significant harm. On another occasion, when staff from another care provision arrived at the home unannounced with a child, who claimed to be a friend of a resident child, the manager did not question the appropriateness of this relationship with the social worker and this resulted in another missing from care episode. In addition, there was a further incident when an unknown adult male came to collect a child from the home and staff did not attempt to stop the child from being taken, instead calling the on call manager for advice. This delayed the reporting of the incident by some time to the police and the individual was only arrested for child abduction two days later.

Risk assessments are completed. However, they are not comprehensive and do not take into account children's individual needs. Some risk assessments have been copied and pasted from one child's records to another. Significant risks identified in care planning records were not identified clearly and only formed part of a sub-section in the document. For example, a child at high risk of sexual exploitation did not have a robust plan around their risks. Instead, this formed part of a section of their plan about sexualised behaviours. This demonstrates a lack of knowledge on behalf of the staff team. Furthermore, the risk assessment plans have not been consistently updated with information relating to emerging or increasing risks to children's safety. For example, reflecting recent allegations of sexual exploitation. Risk assessments are not reviewed to alert staff to heightened concerns around risks to young people so that they can respond promptly to any further incidents and keep children safe.

Despite the identified shortfalls above, there have also been occasions where the home

has been proactive in sharing information with other safeguarding agencies to protect the child when they have been missing, and to minimise concerns regarding child sexual exploitation. Where staff have not followed risk assessments robustly, the manager has investigated and taken appropriate action to minimise repetition of shortfalls. Children who go missing from the home are automatically offered return home interviews by the placing authorities.

Allegations that are made by young people are dealt with promptly and there is clear communication with social workers and the designated officer for the local authority in accordance with statutory guidance. Records identify any action that is taken and outcomes following the conclusion of any investigations. Children are supported to make formal complaints and their concerns are taken seriously by staff.

The manager reviews the suitability of children's placements, and will serve notice on unsuitable placements when there are issues that impact on the protection of other children in the home. During the inspection, the manager dealt with a challenging safeguarding issue sensitively and with minimal disruption to children. She clearly demonstrated persistence in working with partner agencies to ensure that children's safety was paramount.

Physical intervention is used infrequently. Staff have received suitable training and are clear on the thresholds for the use of physical intervention.

Staff vetting procedures are not always sufficiently robust to ensure that children are fully safeguarded from unsuitable people. Although systems are in place to ensure that permanent staff do not work at the home until checks on their identity are verified, one written reference for a new employee was obtained from the manager of a care home rather than from the organisation he had worked for. This prevented the company from disclosing any disciplinary action that may have been taken against the employee that the manager may not have been aware of.

Health and safety arrangements are well managed with regard to regular maintenance checks of the home.

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

The leadership and management of the home are not yet good. The registered manager ceased their role in the home in February 2018 but remains directly involved as a senior manager for the organisation and remains the registered manager of the children's home. An application has been received into Ofsted to register a new manager. The deputy manager has been moved to another home within the company and the two senior staff have left the organisation. The home, therefore, has not experienced consistent leadership and direction since the home was registered in November 2017. As a result, the home has not been able to consistently deliver the caring experience to children as set out in the home's statement of purpose.

The new manager and a new deputy, during their short tenure, have developed positive working relationships with staff and partner agencies. They have identified areas of concern and have begun to make improvements that have resulted in positive developments within the service.

The children receive good information about the service prior to admission, via the children's guide and welcome booklet. The majority of children are making progress from their starting points. Children's needs are consistently prioritised and they are positive about their experiences. However, for some children who previously lived at the home, this was not always the case and, as a result, their placements broke down.

The manager accepted three referrals for children to move into the home within a few days of each other. At the time of the inspection, one of the three children had moved into the home, another was planned to arrive later that day and the third, the day after. This decision was made despite significant events in the life of a child already living in the home that impacted on the child's emotional well-being and behaviour. Senior managers failed to consider whether an admission to the home remained appropriate, given the changes in circumstances for a young person in the intervening period. Managers continued to move the child into the home. This admission process did not adequately consider the needs of all children at the time.

Further placements were stopped during the course of the inspection. While this does appear to be a good decision it was nevertheless as a result of the inspection. As a result, two children who had been to visit the home with the prospect of moving in had to be disappointed as the placement was no longer available.

Managers fail to identify and act on shortfalls in staff practice. For example, plans lack sufficient detail about contact arrangements, potential vulnerabilities and measures in place to manage these.

Although staff benefit from a wide-ranging training programme that includes physical intervention and safeguarding, the training has not been sufficiently targeted to meet the training and development needs of the staff at the home. For example, not all staff have completed training in identifying and dealing with child sexual exploitation, self-harm or addressing the use of drugs and alcohol, despite providing services to children who have these needs.

Staff report that they are supported well by the manager. They can discuss any concerns, and are able to reflect on practice during regular supervision. All staff who have been working with children in a children's home for over two years have completed their level 3 diploma and all of the remaining staff have been enrolled.

The management team has a clear understanding of the individual goals for children to achieve. These are recorded in children's case files and progress sheets and clearly demonstrate improvements that they have made. Children's progress is measured, regularly analysed and reported back to their social worker and family on a weekly basis. This ensures that the service is caring for children as agreed in their plan.

The provider was responsive to issues raised at the inspection, quickly addressing issues of safeguarding noted and developing action plans for improvement. The provider acknowledged that there has been a deterioration in the service and, as a result, has begun to implement change

While a number of requirements and recommendations have been set, partner professionals and children remain positive about the support that they receive. There is a demonstrated commitment and capacity to improve the quality of service.

There are internal monitoring systems in place and the manager's understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development is adequately supported by the reports of an independent visitor. The manager has some clear plans for developing the home in the future. The manager recognises the shortfalls in the home and is determined to ensure that practice improves to a high standard in order to reflect the home's aims and objectives and to promote positive outcomes for children.

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: 1264537

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Roc Northwest Limited

Registered provider address: Roc Northwest Limited, Roc House, Ward Green Lane, Ribchester, Preston, Lancashire PR3 3YB

Responsible individual: Katie Stephens

Registered manager: Natalie Waterhouse

Inspector(s)

Elaine Clare: social care inspector

Lisa Gregoire-Parker: social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

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