

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC005040
Inspector	David Morgan
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Care Today (Children's Services) Ltd
Registered person address	Lansdowne House 85 Buxton Road STOCKPORT Cheshire SK2 6LR
Responsible individual	Vivien Anne Snape
Registered manager	Emma Jane Coen
Date of last inspection	19/11/2014

Inspection date	16/03/2015
Previous inspection	good
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection.

This inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **sustained effectiveness**.

The manager provides clear leadership, which directly contributes to the supportive atmosphere in the home. Most children enjoy stable placements with a team of staff they know well. Children are happy and raise no concerns about the care they receive. The particularly positive relationships that are achieved between them and staff have attracted written applause from visiting professionals. Since the last inspection the manager has taken responsibility for a second home nearby.

The previous inspection made four recommendations and four requirements. These have been addressed and have raised standards in several areas. The Statement of Purpose is now sent to Ofsted after it has been amended, which allows the regulator to monitor the service effectively. Staff recruitment procedures are generally robust. The responsible individual is in discussions with Ofsted about part of this procedure. Evidence of some parts of the recruitment process are not available on site although the checks have been completed. This is an administrative shortfall with no impact on children. Children are now routinely asked if they require medical assistance after they have been held. This serves to ensure that children's physical welfare is protected. Children who go missing are now protected by inter-agency meetings that decide on the most appropriate strategies.

Monitoring exercises are satisfactory. However, the comments by the manager are mainly descriptive rather than evaluative. This means that some shortfalls are reviewed less thoroughly than necessary. For example regarding recruitment records and episodes of negative behaviours. The report's format is very detailed and permits a helpful degree of identification of patterns and trends between months. The confusing presentation of the documents has been addressed somewhat by separating the report written by the independent person. Evidence is not available on site that the independent visitor has received the required consents to read

children's files. This creates a potential breach of children's rights. Effective means are in place to obtain the views of external adults, including social workers and parents. These are consistently positive. One parent said that her child had 'grown and matured'. Several professionals said they were impressed with the staff and the levels of communication they sustain. The manager has identified some key issues for the development of the service. These include the consolidation of the staffing arrangements between her two homes and the rolling out of information to staff about the forthcoming changes in regulations. These are important steps forward.

The admission of new children is considered carefully but this decision-making process is not always recorded. It is not clear in some records, for example, what the likely impact of an admission was on existing children, or vice versa. This means that the quality of the decisions is not evident. New children receive good attention to their individual needs arising from their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The home is on an estate where some individuals present racial challenges to children who are not White. The manager is reviewing her written assessment of the locality to ensure that this risk is taken into account when assessing new referrals. Most children successfully achieve enjoyable long-term placements, establish local friendships and undertake a range of productive leisure activities. They receive substantial help to develop their independence skills. Work is being completed at present to devise succinct ways of showing that progress is being achieved as fast as possible.

Children are kept safe, for example through effective partnerships with other professionals. Also, equipment checks and servicing are up-to-date. Fire safety is given a high priority and everyone knows what to do in an emergency. The arrangements for fire drill evacuations are satisfactory but are less realistic and instructive than possible. This increases the potential risk of complacency.

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to four children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It provides medium to long-term residential care and is owned by a private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/11/2014	Full	good
13/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
19/11/2013	Full	good
06/02/2013	Interim	good progress

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
33 (2001)	inspect such of the children's home's records, as the independent person requires (save for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent to the inspection of those records by the independent person). This is with regard to the need to have evidence of such consents on site. (Regulation 33(8)b)	27/04/2015

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- apply the emergency escape plan so that all staff and children are familiar

with it and have practiced so they know what to do in an emergency. This is with regard to ensuring all staff complete regular fire drills that are unannounced and use different 'emergency' scenarios (NMS 10.9)

- ensure the home implements clear procedures for introducing children to the home, the staff and other children living there. This is with regard to assessing and recording the likely impact of new children on existing ones, and vice versa (NMS 11.1)
- demonstrate that the company consistently follows good recruitment practice, statutory requirements and guidance, in staff recruitment selection. This is with regard to having sufficient evidence of references on site (NMS 16.2)
- implement effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home. This is with regard to such procedures evaluating patterns and trends as part of a process of improvement. (NMS 21.1)

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.