

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	27/09/2016
Unique reference number	SC005040
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	The Partnership of Care Today Children's Services
Registered provider address	Lansdowne House, 85 Buxton Road, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 6LR

Responsible individual	Vivien Snape
Registered manager	Emma Coen
Inspector	David Morgan

Inspection date	27/09/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC005040

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- This service is good because there is effective leadership.
- Young people make good progress from their starting points and benefit from minimal changes of staff. Young people enjoy good relationships with staff.
- Staff receive good support and training and almost all of them are qualified. Procedures are in place to help staff progress in their careers.
- The house has a high standard of presentation and is indistinguishable from its neighbours.
- Other professionals consistently speak highly of the service. They appreciate the good communication, support of families and attention to young people's individual targets.
- Young people receive thorough support, whether they are new or have lived at the home for several years. Staff treat young people with dignity and respect.
- Young people receive effective independence training, which staff adjust to meet their fluctuating needs. As a result, young people move towards adulthood with confidence.
- When greater support is required, staff liaise well with other professionals. Staff are proactive in seeking meaningful resolution of difficulties and challenge partners if necessary.
- The service is robust. However, the manager pays insufficient attention to its improvement and to the professional development of herself and her deputy.

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

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 (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
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must— 13 (2) (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	14/11/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Use the workforce plan to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff, including the home's manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- 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. This is with regard to children seeing and commenting on their admission documents in a timely way. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.19)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to four children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is owned by a large private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
02/09/2015	Full	Good
16/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
19/11/2014	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The manager and her deputy give careful thought to potential admissions. The fact that several young people have lived at the home for a number of years reflects this. However, there have been some external factors, beyond the control of the registered manager, that have influenced recent admissions. Since the last inspection, some young people have only stayed for short periods and this has been unavoidable for the vast majority. One young person required temporary accommodation while his social worker arranged a permanent placement. Another young person left because of high levels of criminal behaviour. The manager has improved the admission process recently by clarifying with her supervisor what admission arrangements will apply while she is on holiday. Additionally, the organisation has recently clarified how it wishes staff to record the suitability of new young people. The new system gives a more robust baseline assessment of each individual. This has caused minor delays in putting such information on file for the benefit of staff and young people. One consequence is that even several weeks after admission, one young person had not had an opportunity to consider or comment upon this information. In other regards, staff induct new young people into the home thoroughly and use a variety of ways to gain their views. One such process allows staff to score young people's feelings about issues such as their self-esteem. This is a valuable tool in tracking young people's progress. Young people make good progress overall and understand their individual targets. One young person wrote, 'This is the best way to show that I can change and am ready to go back home.' New young people arrive at a house that is indistinguishable from its neighbours. It is located in a suburban area with easy access to parks, the countryside and town facilities. The property is of a high standard inside and out and each young person has a comfortable bedroom. During the summer, one young person improved the back garden with a small rockery and plants. The long school holiday also gave young people many opportunities to enjoy a wide range of activities, including a variety of day trips reflecting their individual preferences. Staff, and the registered manager, take young people's views seriously and seek them in a variety of ways. They then take positive action to meet these wishes. For example, the choice of activities during the recent summer holiday reflected requests by the young people. External professionals feel very positive about the service. They say that staff 'communicate well', that it is a 'pleasure to work with the team' and that staff are 'warm and accommodating'. A social worker said, 'I'm really impressed with the homely surroundings and positive relationships between staff and young people.'	

All young people receive prompt attention to their health needs. Staff tackle smoking and other addictions effectively. For one young person, this means that her drug taking has ceased and smoking is significantly less than before. This is an important contribution to her good health. There is a high level of engagement with the organisation's therapists and community-based mental health services. This means that young people receive the help that they need with their emotional difficulties. One young person is reluctant to take advantage of these services but requires specialist support. The manager is therefore planning an alternative approach. In this context, the vital work that staff undertake with young people's families is notable. The successful engagement of their families helps young people to feel settled in the home, especially when they are a long distance away, which many are.

One young person has lived here for several years and will soon move back to her home area. She has benefited from flexible support from staff who routinely visit her at her parent's home, which is a substantial distance away. Staff adapted their support as her circumstances fluctuated and she spent varying amounts of time with her family. This highly successful process met her needs and allowed her to gradually, and naturally, separate from staff. Her social worker said, 'I can't fault them. The staff go above and beyond.' Her father said, 'The staff have been good with her and she gets on well with them. They've always been good with me too, welcoming and keeping me in touch.' Another young person has progressed to this home from a more rural home within the same organisation. This demonstrates the progress that he has made. He feels substantial commitment to the home and says, 'It's the best home I've ever lived in.'

Most young people engage well in education overall. One young person, for example, progressed from having a tutor at home to full-time education with all the benefits that this provides. Education provision varies for each young person and each is on roll at a school. One new young person is temporarily undertaking work packages from her school while the organisation source a tutor. Another young person attends a local school. He has progressed to a point where he no longer requires additional support. Because staff pay close attention to each young person's needs, young people make as much academic progress as possible in their individual circumstances. Staff communicate well with teachers. One young person's school tutor commented that staff always drop the young person off at school on time and that he always looks smart.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people occasionally put themselves at risk, for example, through engagement in criminal behaviour. One young person left after a very short stay because of the extent of his criminal behaviour and the risks to him from local	

people. The manager acted forcefully with other agencies to find a prompt resolution, which maintained the safety of everyone. The staff team reviews its preventative strategies after all negative incidents in order to improve its practice. Staff understand well the risks faced by each young person. Incidents on site occur relatively rarely and staff seldom restrain young people. This is an important contribution to the positive relationships between staff and young people and in preserving young people's dignity.

Levels of young people's safety in the community typically fluctuate but overall they improve. Although he felt safe in the home, as do others, one young person did not wish to engage with staff and was persistently absent. This substantially increased the risks to him. His local authority delayed acting on this matter, which led to the home's manager sending a formal complaint. This episode shows that the staff team provides a high level of advocacy for young people. Staff are proactive. They find out about young people's acquaintances and facilitate positive contact. This educates young people about sustaining relationships and helps to keep them safe.

Currently, the risks from child sexual exploitation are low. In the past, staff worked closely with the police to educate young people and lower the likelihood of incidents occurring. Recently, several young people who had been at risk have successfully moved to independent accommodation. The work that staff completed meant that the risks faced by young people reached acceptable levels.

Staff reward young people for their progress. Equally, young people learn that negative behaviour has consequences, including the loss of privileges. However, staff teach them that they can recover their privileges by acting positively. This is important education for young people. Staff liaise closely with the police about serious issues. This helps to prevent young people from obtaining a criminal record because the police understand their circumstances.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The manager and her deputy oversee two homes that are within a few minutes' walk of each other. Ofsted registered the manager for this home in 2012 and she has suitable qualifications in care and the management of children's homes. She gives staff clear guidance in line with the statement of purpose. The last Ofsted inspection made no requirements or recommendations. The overall result is a stable team, which provides young people with highly consistent role models, who they like and know well. Other professionals respect the team and acknowledge how well it meets each young person's targets. Each young person has a document that identifies their needs and shows their progress. This usefully keeps the information in one place. However, it is too large to use meaningfully with most young people and some staff struggle to understand	

and use it. The manager is correctly considering ways to summarise the key issues.

The organisation and the manager develop future leaders through specific training opportunities and meaningful supervision. The professional opportunities available within the company motivate staff. Staff also benefit from a thorough training programme, which keeps them up to date with professional issues, such as female genital mutilation and radicalisation. All staff have obtained a suitable qualification within the statutory timescales. New staff consider that the training prepares them well for the complexities of caring for each young person. The manager herself receives good supervision and her supervisor visits the home periodically. This is good practice and complements other monitoring. However, both the manager and her deputy are insufficiently clear about their personal development targets. The deputy is ambivalent about undertaking a higher qualification but an alternative plan is not in place. This reduces the rate of improvement of the service.

The regular monitoring received by the service serves to maintain standards. The quality of the independent visitor's reports has fluctuated previously but recent reports are clear and sufficiently authoritative. The manager actively seeks and obtains feedback from external sources and young people, which sustains the service at a good level. However, the manager is unnecessarily cautious about developing the service. Monitoring and other review processes do not clearly drive its improvement. For example, the latest six-monthly monitoring report did not have an action plan. The manager also missed opportunities to reflect on and evaluate issues such as admissions and discharges, pathway planning and family contact arrangements.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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