

SC005067

Registered provider: Esland North Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is part of a private organisation providing up to six placements for young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 30 to 31 May 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: 31 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

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

- Staff have not adhered to safeguarding procedures in some instances.
- Staff turnover and the use of agency staff have not always promoted a

consistent quality of care for young people.

- Case records do not always reflect young people's daily experiences.
- Not all young people are accessing education.
- Staff do not always promote healthy lifestyle choices.
- Staff do not always plan well for young people's returns home or into semi-independence.
- Young people do not always feel that staff respond to their complaints appropriately.
- Staff have not always received supervision that has helped them to understand how best to enable young people to make good progress.
- Staff have missed opportunities to challenge partner agencies and champion the needs of young people.

The children's home's strengths:

- The registered provider has recently appointed an enthusiastic, motivated and child-focused manager to take over as registered manager.
- Young people are able to identify staff who they feel understand them and care about them.
- Young people say that they are happy as staff are nice and care about them.
- Staff take the right steps to protect those young people who are at risk of exploitation from others.
- Young people receive the necessary support to maintain contact with their families.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
17/05/2016	Full	Good
16/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
28/07/2015	Full	Requires improvement

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
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff– help each child to achieve the education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training and to maximise the child's achievement; help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age, to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment; help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plan. (Regulation 8 (1)(2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(viii)(x)) In particular, staff need to ensure that all young people are supported to engage in a suitable education provision to meet their educational needs.	01/07/2017
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.	01/07/2017

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies. (Requirement 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vii)) In particular, staff should ensure that they consistently adhere to safeguarding procedures and act as positive role models for young people.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare; In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to	01/07/2017

each child; 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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received. (Requirement 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(ii)) In particular, the registered manager should ensure that staff champion the needs of young people and use feedback and monitoring systems to ensure that the care provided to young people enables them to make progress in respect of their education, health and emotional needs.	
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Recommendations

- Ensure that staff prepare each child to prepare for any moves from the home, whether they are returning home, moving to another placement or moving to live independently. This includes supporting the child to develop emotional resilience to cope without the home's support and, where the child is moving to live independently, practical skills such as cooking, housework, budgeting and personal self-care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27)
- Ensure that each child's day-to-day health and well-being needs are met. Staff should work to make the children's home an environment that support children's physical, mental and emotional health, in line with the approach set out in the home's statement of purpose. This includes supporting those young people who smoke tobacco to be able to abstain. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 33, paragraph 7.3)
- Ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Case records must be kept up to date. 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)

Inspection judgements

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

The registered manager has not ensured that staff provide young people with consistent care to enable young people to make sustained progress in respect of their educational, health and emotional development. However, the registered provider has taken steps to respond to this shortfall by appointing a new manager.

Young people are positive about the new manager and told the inspector that they felt happier and safer. One young person said that the new manager is, 'Fair, he comes and chats to us about how we are, he has changed loads of things, it is unbelievable, he is improving the house, he has put up curtains and got us new furniture. Even the staff just seem calmer.'

Young people talk positively about the majority of staff. Young people feel listened to and know staff care about them. A young person told the inspector, 'It is good here. The staff do not make you feel judged. I have been in foster care and it is a lot better here. You can tell the staff care, they worry a lot about me.' Despite this, one young person said that a complaint she had made about another young person was not acted on and this has left her feeling frustrated. This means that, while on a day-to-day basis young people feel that their voices are heard, there are occasions when young people have not felt that staff have acted on their views.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the individual needs of young people and tailor the care they offer accordingly. However, case recording is not always up to date and this makes it difficult to measure the impact that staff care has on the progress that some young people make.

Staff have not ensured that all young people are accessing education. For example, one young person was excluded from school for nearly eight months. The staff have not challenged the young person's placing authority to resolve this delay. The staff team has also been slow to improve educational outcomes by helping to address the barriers that affect young people's learning.

In general, staff demonstrate a good understanding of young people's physical and emotional health needs, and support young people to access services, such as the dentist, doctor and child adolescent mental health service, as required. However, some staff have not always acted as positive role models in order to promote healthy lifestyles. For example, there have been occasions when staff have smoked in front of young people. In one incident, this resulted in staff facilitating the young people's use of tobacco. This means that, in some instances, staff have not provided young people with the necessary support to promote their physical health.

Staff planning for young people to return home or into semi-independence is not always well considered, and this means that some young people have made limited progress.

Despite this, some young people are being encouraged to develop the skills they need for adulthood, with young people cooking meals and cakes and being involved in the maintenance of the home. Therefore, although young people are given opportunities to develop some of the skills they need for their future, staff do not always tailor support to ensure that they continually learn new skills.

Since the new manager's appointment there have been significant changes made to the physical environment of the home, which have included the purchase of new furniture and decoration throughout the majority of the property. Although there is more work planned, the home offers young people a suitably pleasant space to live. It is a positive that young people have been heavily involved in the transformation of the property, painting walls and creating new artwork for the walls. Young people have been empowered to take ownership of the home, helping to create their sense of belonging.

Staff recognise the value of young people having contact with their families so that they do not feel isolated. Staff facilitate and promote contact, enabling families to visit the young person in their home or to go out with the young person on activities in the community. This means that young people are able to maintain their relationships with people who are important to them.

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

Staff do not always ensure that up-to-date risk assessments are in place and understood. This limits the staff team's ability to review the strategies that help to keep young people safe.

On occasion, some staff have demonstrated a lack of understanding of safeguarding policies and procedures. Although this has not resulted in any harm, young people have unnecessarily been placed into situations in which they were potentially vulnerable to harm. However, the registered provider's response to these situations has been swift and decisive, with thorough and transparent investigations resulting in actions to reduce the likelihood of these occurring again.

Some young people feel that at times rules and boundaries have not been sufficient to ensure that they feel safe. A young person told the inspector, 'The [registered manager] was really easy going, she let us get away with everything, but in a bad way, but mainly this was with the boys. Obviously, [the new manager] is here now, he comes in and tells us the dangers of things.' A positive result is that all young people told the inspector that they do feel safe, that they understand what is expected of them and that staff are fair and consistent.

Staff use incentives, which help young people to be more motivated to engage. One young person said, 'You don't just get the money, they buy you something; we are getting an underage driving course.' Staff support young people to make positive behaviour choices and learn to manage their emotions better.

For those young people at risk of self-harm, sensitive, caring staff, who are alert to the signs that young people are struggling to cope, provide personalised care to minimise the potential risk. Staff try to be creative in responding to these behaviours, with shaped ice cubes and stress balls offered as an alternative to actual harm. Furthermore, staff work closely with specialist services, including the child and adolescent mental health services, so that young people receive the support they need to manage their emotions safely.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of those young people who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and radicalisation, and take the necessary steps to protect them. Staff implement restrictions on free time, phone access and internet use, as well as providing targeted key-work sessions in order to support young people to be safe and to understand the risks themselves. Equally, staff are not risk-averse and they empower young people to have opportunities to demonstrate that they can make safe choices.

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

The newly appointed manager has quickly established a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The manager has already implemented a raft of changes, which in some instances have had an immediate impact. However, his limited time in post means that he has not yet had the opportunity to fully embed these changes, particularly with regard to how staff ensure that they deliver consistent, personalised care.

Over the last 12 months, there have been significant staff changes, with 11 staff leaving. As a result, young people have not experienced a consistent and stable staff team. For one young person, this has been particularly unsettling and he is struggling with the ongoing staff changes, including the arrival of a new manager. The majority of vacancies have now been filled. However, some of the new staff have only come into post in recent weeks, which means that agency staff have continued to be used. Staff stability has affected young people's sense of permanency and stability.

The majority of staff have completed the level 3 diploma for residential childcare. The remaining staff are either enrolled or are currently in their probation period.

Staff have consistently received management supervision, although some staff have felt that the quality of supervision has not fully supported their learning and understanding on how best to support young people to stay safe and make progress. Reassuringly, staff say that supervision completed by the new manager has been reflective and supportive and that it is really helping them understand how best to support young people.

Staff have developed good links with key stakeholders, including the police, child and adolescent mental health services and local authorities. However, at times there have been missed opportunities to challenge stakeholders when they have not provided a sufficient service for young people. For one young person, this has contributed to the

delays in accessing suitable education.

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: SC005067

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Esland North Limited

Registered provider address: 1 Foundry Lane, Milford, Belper DE56 0RN

Responsible individual: Lyndsey Sim

Registered manager: Cheryl Wells

Inspector

Paul Robinson, social care inspector

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