

# SC008271

Registered provider: The Partnership of Care Today

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

A large private provider operates this home. The home offers care for up to two children who have experienced childhood instability, resulting in trauma and associated complex behaviours.

The manager has applied to register with Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### Inspection dates: 5 and 6 January 2022

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| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>requires improvement to be good</b> |
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| How well children and young people are helped and protected | requires improvement to be good |
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| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | requires improvement to be good |
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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:** 30 September 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement    |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 30/09/2019      | Full            | Good                    |
| 28/11/2018      | Full            | Good                    |
| 20/04/2017      | Full            | Good                    |
| 18/01/2017      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness |

## Inspection judgements

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

Managers have not acted promptly to bring about sustained improvements since the home's previous inspection. Seven requirements have been raised at this inspection; two of these are restated from the previous inspection.

Two children live in this home. Children have made some good progress since coming to live at the home. However, staff do not provide sufficient support to maintain this and help children to progress further.

The home is not always well maintained. Although children's bedrooms are personalised and maintained, staff do not ensure that other aspects of the home are welcoming. For example, the garden area is unkempt and littered with rubbish. Furthermore, repairs required in the home have not been completed in a timely manner. This practice does not create a nurturing and homely environment.

Staff consult children through key-work sessions and house meetings. This support helps children to express their views and feelings. However, staff do not always apply the same level of support to help children understand behaviours that are harmful to them and others. For example, when children had been involved in criminal damage, they were not spoken to by staff to or encouraged to undertake any restorative work. As a result, staff had not helped children to understand the impact of their behaviour on others and to maintain positive relationships.

Children's records are not always regularly reviewed and updated. For example, documents tracking children's progress do not always contain the relevant information. This means that staff are not able to measure children's achievements or what further support they may need.

Managers do not ensure that they have permission to use devices in the home for the purpose of monitoring or surveillance of children. Children's bedrooms have door alarms fitted, without the written consent of the placing local authorities. Staff have not regularly reviewed these measures within the home. This practice is intrusive and impacts on children's privacy.

Managers do not always ensure that when the independent visitor visits the home they consistently seek the views of children, their families or social workers. This may impede the quality of their view as children's views and external feedback is not always sought.

Children are supported to attend school and engage in learning. They make good progress in their education from their starting points. Staff liaise with children's education placement and social workers to ensure that the impact of any absences from school on their learning and development is minimal.

Staff support children to maintain positive relationships with those who are important to them. They communicate with social workers to review the arrangements for children to spend time with their families. Staff show a good understanding of the importance of children spending meaningful time with their families. Children benefit from this care and understanding.

Staff help each child to prepare for any moves from the home, whether they are returning home, moving to a different home or to live independently. For example, one child moved on successfully to a new family. Staff worked closely with the placing authority and supported the child so they were prepared both practically and emotionally when leaving.

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

Children are not always supported by staff to develop understanding and empathy towards each other. Staff do not challenge poor behaviour effectively. For example, one child had threatened to seriously harm another child in the home. Staff did not have the skills to engage the children in constructive dialogue about the potential dangers. As a result, children do not understand and develop skills to create safe, stable and secure relationships with each other.

Staff do not always show enough professional curiosity and vigilance about risk. Risk assessments are not always clear and do not contain relevant and accurate information to help staff to protect children. Staff do not engage in discussion with children about internet safety. Furthermore, not all staff read and understand children's risk assessments. For example, one member of staff was unsure what risks are posed to one child. This leaves staff without all the necessary information they need to reduce potential risks to children.

Managers do not always use monitoring and review systems to help with their oversight of the home. For example, they had not identified an issue with two fire doors in the home, or that the fire risk assessment did not highlight this issue. The manager took action to address this following the inspection.

Staff and managers do not ensure that they promptly inform the relevant local authority designated officer (LADO) following any allegation. For example, when one child alleged that they had been harmed by a member of staff, the manager did not refer to the LADO as required. This is a missed opportunity to ensure safeguarding protocols are consistently followed.

Managers ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to regular scrutiny, to ensure that their use is fair and proportionate. However, some physical intervention records do not contain accurate information. For example, in one incident when staff used physical interventions to protect children, records lacked detail about the number of restraints that occurred during the same incident. Despite this oversight, there has not been a negative impact on children's safety.

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

The manager has been in post since December 2021. When they were appointed, they quickly identified the strengths and weaknesses in the home. An action plan is ongoing to address the shortfalls.

Restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on face-to-face training for staff. Managers did not ensure that staff continued to receive refresher training. For example, there is a six week delay in staff receiving their annual refresher course in physical intervention.

Children do not always receive consistent care from a core staff team. Managers have relied on staff employed by the company but to a different home to provide sufficient staff to this home. Senior managers identify this and have plans for a recruitment campaign

Staff provide positive feedback and confirm they are well supported by the managers. Staff benefit from regular team meetings. However, the quality and frequency of staff supervision is variable. Furthermore, the managers do not always use supervision and appraisals effectively, to monitor staff progress and professional development. This does not promote staff development and improve practice within the home.

Overall, the managers have developed effective monitoring and review systems. However, some shortfalls have been identified during the inspection, such as the home's locality risk assessment not being updated. The impact of this is considered low as the manager is addressing this shortfall.

Managers do not ensure that the independent visitor speaks and listens to the children when they visit the home. This means that children's views and feelings are not always sought, and children do not feel listened to.

The home's statement of purpose has recently been updated, but it does not accurately reflect changes to the staff team. This does not give up-to-date information about staff working at the home to those who may read it.

Staff and managers have developed positive working relationships with children's families and feedback about staff is positive.

## **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                |
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| <p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p> <p>positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;</p> <p>encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding;</p> <p>help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;</p> <p>communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding;</p> <p>help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful;</p> <p>help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship;</p> <p>understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have</p> | <p>18 February 2022</p> |

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| <p>the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;</p> <p>that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others.<br/>(Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c)<br/>(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(ix)(b))</p> <p>This particularly refers to staff supporting children to explore their emotions and build positive relationships.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                         |
| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies;</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health.<br/>(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vii)(d))</p> <p>This particularly refers to staff ensuring that risk assessments are reviewed and kept up to date.</p> <p>It also relates to ensuring that all aspects of the home are welcoming.</p> | <p>18 February 2022</p> |
| <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that—</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>18 February 2022</p> |

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| <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(a)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h))</p> <p>This particularly refers to the registered manager ensuring that all staff receive refresher mandatory training.</p> <p>Also, to the registered manager ensuring that they have sufficient staff to provide consistent care to the children.</p> <p>And, to ensuring they use internal monitoring systems more effectively.</p> |                         |
| <p>The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if—</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children;</p> <p>the child’s placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance;</p> <p>so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child’s age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>18 February 2022</p> |



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| <p>intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d))</p> <p>This particularly refers to the registered manager ensuring that the home has local authority consent for the monitoring and surveillance of children.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                  |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and</p> <p>have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that all staff receive regular and reflective supervision and appraisals.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 18 February 2022 |
| <p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect; and</p> <p>sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect.</p> <p>The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular—</p> <p>provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located;</p> <p>provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response. (Regulation 34 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(d))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring</p> | 18 February 2022 |

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| <p>that staff follow safeguarding protocol when an allegation is made.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                         |
| <p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p> <p>are signed and dated by the author of each entry.<br/>(Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p> <p>This relates to staff ensuring that all children's records are updated.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p> | <p>18 February 2022</p> |

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person speaks to the children to ascertain their wishes and feelings. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)
- The registered person should ensure that the home's fire risk assessment is updated and that the home complies with relevant health and safety legislation. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that the home's statement of purpose is reviewed and updated. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)
- The registered person should ensure that staff describe measures of control and restraint accurately in children's records. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.33)

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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:** SC008271

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered Provider:** The Partnership of Care Today

**Registered provider address:** Lansdowne House, 85 Buxton Road, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 6LR

**Responsible individual:** Vivien Snape

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspector

Patrick McIntosh, Social Care Inspector

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