

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	08/07/2015
Unique reference number	SC008271
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	The Partnership of Care Today Children's Services
Registered person address	Lansdowne House, 85 Buxton Road, STOCKPORT, Cheshire, SK2 6LR

Responsible individual	Vivien Snape
Registered manager	Position vacant
Inspector	David Morgan

Inspection date	08/07/2015
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 are	Requires improvement
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.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC008271

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- There is insufficient coordination of individual shifts.
- Cleanliness of the home remains unsatisfactory in parts.
- The safety of children is compromised by broken window retainers.
- Some aspects of record-keeping and monitoring are not sufficiently robust.
- The evaluations of the locality and of other children are not used effectively when admitting new children.
- Unnecessarily institutional features remain in the property.
- Insufficient evidence of supervision meetings for the manager and records of these meeting for staff compromises performance monitoring.

The children's home strengths

- The service now benefits from an experienced and qualified manager who has a good understanding of children's homes.
- The home provides personalised care to children based on a model of integrated care, education and therapy.
- Staff establish meaningful relationships with children, which helps them settle into the home and recover from their previous experiences.
- Offending and other negative behaviours reduce.

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, ensure that children receive care from staff who understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children. (2) In particular, and with reference to undertaking effective planning of each shift and keeping the property clean inside and out, the registered person must ensure – (b) that staff – (i) understand and apply the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 6(2)b)	24/08/2015
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, ensure that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, and with reference to preventing children accessing and leaving the premises through bedroom windows, the registered person must ensure — (d) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12(2)d)	24/08/2015
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. This is with regard to the daily records being signed by staff. (Regulation 36, Schedule 3)	24/08/2015

The registered person must maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4. This with reference to keeping a copy of the staff duty roster of persons working at the home, and a record of the actual rosters worked. This is with reference to those rosters worked by the manager. (Regulation 37(1)(a), Schedule 4, paragraph (3))	24/08/2015
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). This is with reference to drawing clear conclusions from the exercise and implementing them. (Regulation 46(1))	24/08/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home complies with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. This is with regard to replacing the padlocks and clasps that are in the home. (The Guide to the Quality Standards Guide, page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- ensure each child's placement plan sets out the permissions that their placing authority has delegated to the registered person. This should provide clarity on the home's ability to give permission for school trips, sleep-overs or the child's involvement in sporting, leisure and cultural activities. Wherever possible the home should secure the appropriate authority to support children to be involved in the same positive activities as their peers. (The Guide to the Quality Standards Guide, page 30, paragraph 6.2)
- ensure the registered person actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. This is with regard to the monitoring of physical interventions in which he has been involved. (The Guide to the Quality Standards Guide, page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- ensure the registered person only accepts placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered

the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. This is with regard to showing such impact assessments in the child's records. (The Guide to the Quality Standards Guide, page 56, paragraph 11.4)

- ensure a record of supervision is kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). (The Guide to the Quality Standards Guide, page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- ensure the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions are kept and to ensure that both the person giving the supervision and staff member have a copy of the record. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 13.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered for two children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a private company that also has a number of other homes.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/02/2015	CH - Interim	Sustained effectiveness
07/11/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
10/03/2014	CH - Interim	Satisfactory Progress
05/11/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	requires improvement
Although this service requires improvement, the experiences of individual children are good. They often arrive at short notice but staff are able to establish meaningful relationships with them. Staff are described as 'nurturing' by professionals. This leads to valuable discussions about issues of importance to each child. The small scale of the service means that individual needs are addressed in detail, with due consideration of children's cultural requirements. There is, however, insufficient clarity in records about how admission decisions are reached given the potential impact new children can have on existing ones, and vice versa. This increases the likelihood of avoidable difficulties arising at a later date. Children experience rigorous attention to their educational needs. Despite the unplanned nature of their admissions and the rapid changes that some children experience, they are soon engaged in as much education as possible. Sometimes this is in liaison with another children's home nearby. Shortfalls created by placing authorities are challenged firmly and alternative plans are implemented promptly. This gives children a structure to their lives and contributes to their improved self-esteem. One social worker felt the team goes 'above and beyond' in this regard. Improvements have been made recently to the recording process so that children's progress is more readily evident. Children plan their weekly programmes with staff to include a wide range of activities. These include trips, sports, including football, and visiting a local climbing wall. Children experience new challenges and social opportunities. Their friends visit and they are supported to maintain existing relationships. As a result, they soon feel settled and are able to make the most of what is on offer. This is compromised somewhat by a lack of clarity from placing social workers about the authority that has been delegated to staff. The compilation of weekly programmes is an important contribution towards children's independence skills, even for younger individuals. Children learn to organise themselves within budget and responsibly. The home does not have a car for its sole use and therefore good use is made of public transport. Families are consulted regularly and involved as much as possible in their child's life. As a result, their families are positive about the service and are helped to contribute to the consistent care of children. This has other positive repercussions. In some cases, for example, families have been able to prevent children getting into trouble. For other children it has contributed to a more successful transition away from the home.	

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
The safety of children is compromised by insecure first floor windows. As a result, children have used their bedroom windows to enter and leave the property. This poses substantial risks to their physical safety and also undermines the supervision offered by staff. When they are off-site, a range of common risks place children at risk of harm. The manager as part of an assessment of the locality has reviewed these. However, the conclusions are not clear or comprehensive, there not shared with staff and do not influence practice. This means, for example, that assessments of new referrals do not take into account factors such as nearby children's homes. This increases the risks to children unnecessarily. Children feel safe in the home. They can keep their belongings safe and they have sufficient private space. Any issues of bullying are addressed effectively and with the support of external agencies, where necessary. Staff have good working relationships with agencies that provide advice about drug misuse and sexual exploitation. Risk-taking behaviours are stabilised overall and there are very few incidents of children going missing. Routine contact is maintained with the police and every child has a number of external adult they can contact. Children clearly demonstrate and understand their rights including having confidence in using the complaints procedure. Any safety issues that require personalised attention are addressed on an ongoing basis by all staff but specifically in meetings with key-workers. Consequently, negative incidents are kept at a low level. Physical interventions are rarely used. Instead staff use as part of personalised behaviour management programme more rewards and consequences to help young people self-regulate their emotions.	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
An experienced and qualified manager who has been in post for about six months now leads on developing the service. He has a clear plan for the improvement of the service and is addressing these targets systematically. This includes completing	

the requirement and recommendation from the last inspection. However, there are still shortfalls in his plan, this includes weaknesses in the management of individual shifts. Cleanliness of the property is below an acceptable standard, written guidance about daily tasks is not always followed, and staff are not sufficiently well-led or motivated to act on such shortfalls promptly. This poses potential health risks to children and staff. Similarly, daily records are not always signed and dated by staff. This obstructs the monitoring of records. Staff members are allocated to individual houses but may be called upon to do shifts in the sister home. Coordination of both rotas falls to the manager of this home and the responsibilities of key individuals are under review.

The manager undertakes shifts from time-to-time. These shifts are not clearly recorded, which creates an obstacle in the event of a review or investigation. Staff have regular supervision meetings with a line manager. The supervision meetings of the manager are not adequately evidenced on site. This reduces the ability of a visitor to accurately monitor leadership of the service. Also, staff are not routinely provided with a copy of their supervision records, which compromises their attention to any action points especially as they have important developmental issues.

The property is gradually being improved through re-decoration and refurbishment. This is in line with the requirement made at the last inspection. The manager is aware of gaps around external doors and badly soiled conservatory roof. However, institutional features remain in the form of clasps and padlocks on some cupboards. These are inappropriate features in a domestic setting and reduce its homeliness.

As a result of the last inspection by Ofsted, improvements have been made to the reporting format of the independent person to show his conclusions more clearly. However, in regard to the monitoring of physical interventions in which the manager has been involved, there is limited external oversight.

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 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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