

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	9 June 2016
Unique reference number	SC008271
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	Terence Poulson
Inspector	David Morgan

Inspection date	9 June 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	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

SC008271

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The service has progressed to a good standard under the new manager.
- Young people are positive about the home even when their personal situations are not so good. They understand how to achieve their personal objectives.
- The property itself is attractive inside and out.
- The manager has established a competent team of staff and he supports them well. There have been minimal changes. The team creates a lively and friendly atmosphere in the home.
- Staff advocate strongly for young people and ensure that other agencies respect their rights. The small size of the service facilitates a high level of personalised care. Staff address any special requirements arising from young people's backgrounds.
- Young people make good progress overall. Their self-confidence improves and they take advantage of the wide-ranging opportunities.
- Young people feel safe and know that staff care for them. They receive clear advice and support.
- Staff encourage young people to focus on positive futures. Formal and informal education forms a key part of the care, and some young people make substantial progress.
- There are relatively few negative incidents. Although the level of risk to young people varies as they get older and their circumstances change, in each case it remains relatively low.
- Other professionals are positive about the service. There is a high standard of effective collaboration between them, staff, and young people's families.
- There are no major shortfalls in the service. The manager is ambitious for further improvement. He knows which areas to develop and how to achieve this, given the resources at his disposal.

Full report

Information about this children's home

A large provider of children's services operates this two-bedded home for children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25 February 2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
8 July 2015	Full	Requires improvement
12 February 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
7 November 2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people are completely positive about the home. They usually get on with each other and feel relaxed with staff. The home has a pleasant atmosphere and each young person has a clear routine. The property itself is attractive inside and out. Plants in the front garden, seating at the rear, and other features make it homely. Staff keep it clean throughout and show a pride in it. The manager has improved the admissions process significantly. Consequently, young people complement each other well. Each young person feels free to do what they want without undue pressure from the other. They progress in very different ways too. Another advantage of an effective admissions process is the low turnover of young people. No changes have occurred since the last inspection in February, and the overall rate of change has fallen. This minimises the disruptive effect of such changes and helps young people to feel secure. The beneficially low rate of change of staff mirrors this. Young people learn to work towards agreed targets. They are clear about their own targets, which often relate to achieving greater independence. Staff complete substantial amounts of work through focused discussions, meetings, and informal consultation. Substantial programmes of training are available to young people who are preparing to leave. Some young people do not engage in this process, and then alternatives are tried. Staff work very closely with colleagues in other agencies, which helps to address young people's rights. They sometimes have daily contact with social workers to discuss strategies for young people. Young people appreciate these efforts, even if they cannot always cooperate fully. One said, 'The staff are nice. They care for us. They are always polite and treat everyone the same.' All young people are from the local area and none has any additional cultural or religious needs. Staff keep these issues under review in case their requirements change. Young people make good progress in a variety of areas. Their social skills and self-confidence improve. Their access to and benefit from education is often substantial. Young people become healthy and learn to pursue active lifestyles. Their growth rates and personal hygiene improve. The impact of drugs and alcohol is minimal. Young people's emotional well-being improves, too, as they form attachments to staff. Young people understand this. They also benefit emotionally from the strong links that staff maintain with their families. Young people enjoy a range of activities in the home and further away. The	

property is close to city amenities as well as to rural areas, and young people benefit from both. They earn treats, such as trips to Alton Towers, and enjoy pastimes such as pool and cinema. Staff encourage young people to build social networks in the area.

Staff support each young person well. Staff supplement education programmes with homework and additional courses. One young man wrote about how he likes reading with staff after school. Courses specifically related to young people's needs have recently included food safety, sexual health, and cycling proficiency. Young people's educational progress varies, depending on their emotional situation. Some do remarkably well in both attendance and achievement, while others fluctuate, despite the incentives. Staff act upon new patterns of behaviour by collaborating closely with relevant professionals. Because the service has only recently resumed under new management and the young people are relatively new, long-term patterns have not yet emerged.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people are safe and feel safe. They do not always fully cooperate, but staff energetically engage them, their families, and other parties to minimise any risks. One young person said, 'They do check on us, but it's only because they care.' Staff use non-specialist techniques to encourage positive behaviour, such as incentives and reward schemes, usually successfully. While reflecting on this process and its extensive benefits for young people, one young person said, 'We get quite a lot, to be honest.' Staff address negative incidents with so-called consequences that usually involve the simple withdrawal or delay of privileges. Young people understand this process and feel that it is fair. Positive consequences vastly outweigh the negative ones, and physical intervention is rarely used. This contributes to the positive and inclusive atmosphere in the home. The team has good links with the police. This was only for routine communication until recently, and then a young person went missing on a small number of occasions. Discussions with the young person and relevant professionals have now minimised the risks and resulted in a review of his placement plan. Young people understand the processes that affect them and their implications. They are not at risk of sexual exploitation. Staff are alert to the risks posed by various forms of radicalisation and hold age-appropriate conversations with the young people, often around the dinner table. A professional person recently commented, 'I'm impressed with the positive and caring attitude of staff.'	

The risks that each young person faces are clear. Records also provide a summary of the changes. This contributes to a useful picture of each young person's progress. In practical terms, this gives direction and impetus to the reviews of each young person's care.

The property is now at a good standard of presentation. This helps to avoid minor incidents, such as slips and falls. Staff check the fire safety equipment regularly, and everyone knows how to respond in an emergency. On a day-to-day basis, the greatest risk is from young people's behaviour, especially around the office and staircase where space is limited, but such incidents are relatively infrequent.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager has been in post since September last year and has suitable qualifications. He has gained substantial experience elsewhere in the company and uses this effectively. The standard of care in the home has improved appreciably during his tenure because staff respond well to his leadership. All the senior staff are qualified and provide a high level of competence and continuity to young people. Newer staff are on target to complete their qualifications within the required timescales. A high standard of leadership prevails and is key to the good retention of staff. No complaints have occurred, and the manager is building up the methods of obtaining regular feedback. Staff appreciate the support that they receive from the manager, which is systematic and energetic. He networks well with people outside the home, and this has benefits when he needs to challenge them, arrange meetings or obtain paperwork. Staff work together effectively and the manager is clear about how to develop them further, for example, through individual supervision and appraisal meetings. One member of staff said, 'It's a nice place to work. I look forward to coming.' All the training events contribute to helping young people to make good progress. Several members of staff are able to deputise for the manager although there is not a designated deputy manager. The manager oversees another registered children's home in the same street, which he is refurbishing. A deputy manager position is likely to arise when that home reopens. Young people's records are up to date and young people sign those that they are most interested in. They also keep memorabilia to remind them of enjoyable events. Recent improvements have included attention to the requirement and recommendation of the last inspection. As a result, the monthly monitoring reports	

are clearer and more accurate. The manager's monitoring gives him a thorough understanding of the service and drives his plans for improvement. The area manager undertakes additional monitoring, which is an important contribution towards ensuring that the service is robust. This good standard of monitoring confirms that the service is adhering to its statement of purpose and prioritising the needs of young people.

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 children looked after 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 that 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 whom 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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