

SC008271

Registered provider: The Partnership of Care Today Children's Services

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 and accommodation for up to two children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 20 to 21 April 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 18 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The new manager provides enthusiastic and child-focused leadership.
- The manager has integrated himself effectively into the team. He successfully splits his time between his two homes.

- The staff team is relatively stable and provides young people with a good standard of consistency.
- There is a settled and comfortable atmosphere in the home, which young people appreciate. They feel safe.
- Young people make clear progress in terms of their behaviour, emotional stability, and social skills.
- Liaison with young people's families and with other professionals is a strength of the service, which clearly helps young people feel settled.
- Young people benefit socially and recreationally from a property that is well located. There is easy access to city amenities and the countryside.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The shortfalls identified in this inspection are mainly administrative and include, for example, insufficiently frequent supervision of new staff.
- The written risk assessments for young people are not up to date. This increases the risk of inconsistency amongst staff.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
09/06/2016	Full	Good
25/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
08/07/2015	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
Ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. This is with regard to new staff receiving formal supervision at the required intervals. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))	29/05/2017
Complete a quality of care review by establishing and maintaining a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it. (Regulation 45 (2)(b))	29/05/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. This is with regard to risk assessments being kept up to date. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- Have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should: detail the necessary management and staffing structure, (including any staff commissioned to provide health and education), the experience and qualifications of staff currently working within the staffing structure and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the home's statement of purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people experience a stable home with very few disruptions. The two young men

are from this area and have lived here for over a year. The changes that have occurred to the staff team have occurred gradually and with young people's involvement. Some staff have moved to the home across the road so they have sustained their positive relationships with the young people. One professional said, 'It's a comfortable, welcoming place.'

Staff and the manager understand the young people well. Relationships between staff and young people are relaxed and good-humoured. Staff establish strong working relationships with other professionals and with young people's families. This combination allows them to understand young people's backgrounds and address each young person's needs with maximum impact. Families feel included and young people benefit from this collaboration. A young person recently enjoyed a birthday celebration, arranged by staff, which included his family. One young man very recently returned to his family. This occurred at his pace and in a gradual way that reflected the strong communication between all the parties. Staff are arranging a celebration at which they will present him with photographs and other mementos of his stay. The other young person routinely spends weekends with his family. Both young men have learned new skills around the house and take pride in how the house is presented.

The home accommodates a maximum of two young people. This facilitates the high level of consultation between staff and young people. Consequently, young people influence decisions that affect them individually and as a group. For example, they enjoy a wide range of activities. One has helped to plan his first holiday abroad. He enjoyed a range of trips over the Easter holiday, including playing golf with the manager. Staff direct young people towards activities that will provide the greatest benefits, whether they be physical or social. The manager has consulted the remaining young person about the sort of person he would like to share the house with in the future. This makes young people feel valued and gives them experience of being part of complex decisions.

Since the last inspection, the manager has improved staff's liaison with teachers. Consequently, staff now have a good understanding of young people's academic status, their individual challenges and academic progress. Outcomes naturally vary between young people. One young person struggles to attend school regularly, so staff tried a variety of ways of helping him. This served to show the young person the importance of formal education. Another young person has an excellent attendance record and is steadily making up for lost time. Regular meetings between staff and teachers help staff provide the additional support he requires. It has resulted in him moving to a smaller class and he has started at an after-school club where he enjoys building robots. This addresses his need for a wider social circle.

Staff ensure that relevant professionals monitor each young person's health regularly. Young people learn to keep themselves healthy, for example by brushing their teeth regularly, and one young person now wears his spectacles. Staff facilitate young people's access to specialist mental health services, where appropriate. Regular and detailed conversations between staff and young people help young people understand social and emotional issues. As a result, young people gain emotional security, which provides noticeable improvements in their self-confidence. Staff are alert to changes in young

people's health and bring them to the attention of relevant professionals. This means, for example, that medication regimes help young people as much as possible.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Young people feel safe in the home. They regularly say as much to the independent visitor and to their families. One young person said, 'I like it here but I miss living with a family.' They reflect their feelings by helping with the decoration of the home and pursuing hobbies. They have excellent relationships with the staff and serious incidents and physical interventions occur very rarely.

Staff correctly feel proud of their approach to young people's behaviour and its effectiveness. Young people have progressed to the point where they are not at risk of exploitation or radicalisation and nearly always let staff know where they are. When they cause minor damage, they help to repair it. They have learned to manage themselves in a safe way. One young person, for example, is more careful about who he meets. Another has learned to tolerate losing at sports by turning it into a joke. This socially acceptable reaction has helped him gain self-confidence. Staff control young people's access to the internet and adjust this according to the young person's needs.

Staff understand the particular needs of each young person well and act consistently. However, they do not always reflect this accurately in written risk assessments. Consequently, the measures that are required to address behavioural issues are often inaccurate. The fact that staff are using verbal exchange of information rather than the written risk assessments to inform their practice increases the risk of young people receiving unclear instructions.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager joined the company last year and Ofsted registered him earlier this year. He has started a training course in management. He has a positive and inclusive approach, which young people, staff and people from outside the home appreciate. As befits his inexperience in the role, he is keen to learn and use information to improve the service, in line with the statement of purpose. Young people's families welcome the manager's ambitions for young people. His encouragement has increased their involvement, which has improved young people's safety and emotional stability. The manager maintains frequent contact with social workers, in particular. This means that there is a high level of collaboration, and during this inspection period there has been no need to escalate concerns further.

In a short space of time, the manager has made several improvements to the service. The office is more organised, with key tasks and timescales clearly identified. This helps staff to work efficiently. Staff now have clearer guidance about what duties each placing authority has delegated to them. This saves time and embarrassment. Staff have redecorated part of the house and plan to refurbish the kitchen. Staff undertake much positive work with young people's families and now record this more clearly. Young people's views have a high profile in their files, which serves to emphasise their value.

The manager has an accurate and detailed understanding of his service, including young people's progress. He receives regular support from his line manager, which has helped him to get up to speed quickly. There have been no complaints. The six-monthly monitoring reports lack sufficient evidence and evaluation of the impact of young people's views, although this is substantial in practice. This underrepresents the good work that occurs. The manager provides every team member with regular and detailed support, although this is less frequent than required for new staff. Staff receive regular, good-quality training, which head office supplement with online courses. One member of staff has chosen to do a course about mental health to help her understand young people's reactions to their previous experiences. All staff are either appropriately qualified or are on track to qualify within the required timescales. They are happy to work here. One said, 'We get on well. We work similarly to each other.'

The last inspection raised one recommendation. Staff are now actively involved with teachers in agreeing on education targets. This has improved their understanding of young people's educational progress, which they use in direct work with the young people. This is the manager's first managerial position. This explains the shortfalls identified in this report, which are primarily administrative.

The manager runs his two homes separately, but there is some overlap of the teams, for example to cover sickness. This means that young people experience a high level of continuity of care. Some senior staff are undertaking additional training, as befits their role. This will contribute to clarity about who undertakes deputising responsibilities. This issue is not critical because all core staff already carry a high level of responsibility because they frequently work alone. The workforce plan reflects the staffing arrangements, but is not up to date regarding staff's training needs. This means that the manager cannot use this source of information.

The manager has implemented a child-friendly version of young people's placement plans, which they see regularly. This helps to make the information useful and helps engage young people.

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: SC008271

Provision sub-type: 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: Philip Allcock

Inspector

David Morgan, social care inspector

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