

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 four children who have experienced childhood instability, resulting in trauma and associated complex behaviours.

The registered manager holds a level 4 qualification in leadership and management.

Inspection dates: 30 September to 1 October 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 28 November 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/11/2018	Full	Good
20/04/2017	Full	Good
18/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
09/06/2016	Full	Good

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 registered person must prepare and implement a policy which— - is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect; and - sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular— - 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; - 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)(c)(d))	18/11/2019
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; - are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that children's files contain a clear rationale and plan for contact with family and any other person.	18/11/2019

Recommendations

- Records must be kept detailing all individual incidents when children go missing from the home (regulation 36 (schedule 3(14))). This information should be shared with the placing authority and, where appropriate, with the child's parents. Evaluation of missing incidents should be undertaken to identify any gaps in training, skills or knowledge for staff or to record and retain evidence of what worked well. This evaluation should inform the review of the quality of care. (see paragraph 15.2). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.31)
- Records of restraint must be kept and should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and

respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

- Staff should 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. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5) In particular, ensure that children's risk assessments contain clear guidance for staff to manage risk.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The two children living in the home since the last inspection have recently moved on to new placements. One child moved due to the escalating risks associated with his behaviour while another moved to a specialist placement better placed to meet his needs.

Staff worked hard to build strong and trusted relationships with both children. This helped one child to form a strong sense of belonging to the home. Overall, these solid foundations helped the child to make good progress with his behaviour and education. However, another child spent a significant amount of time with family and struggled to invest in the home. Despite these challenges, staff supported the child to attend his education provisions, complete exams and engage with his youth offending order.

Staff supported one child to make good progress with his education. His overall attendance and engagement in school were excellent considering his starting point. Another child received home tutoring and enjoyed an off-site education placement on a local farm. Staff supported this child to apply for apprenticeships and develop some aspirations.

Children participated in decisions about their day-to-day care, such as creating menus and choosing activities. One child responded well to rewards for positive behaviour. Staff used this strategy well when concerns arose about his association with a risky peer group. For example, the child received rewards for returning home at an agreed time. This provided the child with a sense of achievement while alleviating the risk he was exposed to.

One child made good progress in developing his independence skills. He learned how to cook, budget and shop independently. Staff supported the child to write a CV and search for training opportunities. This equipped him with important skills for his future.

Both children took part in regular activities and enjoyable experiences. This included trips to a local theme park and cinema. One child was a member of a local football team and

enjoyed impromptu games of football with staff.

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

One child made a number of allegations about his care while living at the home. Overall, the registered manager responded to these concerns in a robust manner. However, on one occasion, while the registered manager took some action to explore the child's concern, he did not consult the local designated officer or notify the child's social worker. This was a missed opportunity for safeguarding agencies to fully investigate the matter and provide an independent view. Not following due process in response to allegations has the potential to place children at risk of harm.

The registered manager acted swiftly when another child's community-based risks escalated. He shared key information with the child's social worker and youth offending team. As a result, the child's social worker proposed a new safety plan. This meant that the child spent a significant amount of time away from the home with family members. These arrangements were subject to a written agreement between the child's social worker and family members. Overall, this plan helped to reduce the level of risk the child was exposed to. However, the child's file did not contain the safety plan or written agreement. In addition, it lacked information about the social worker's assessment of risk and their decision to allow the child significant time away from the home. These omissions could have impacted the registered manager's ability to oversee and review the effectiveness of these safety plans.

The inspection identified a number of recording shortfalls in key safeguarding documents. For example, some restraint records lacked detail about the event. In addition, some records used to capture incidents of going missing are poor. Information is recorded in different places and does not provide the registered manager with a clear audit trail to review and to learn from these events. The impact of these recording shortfalls is lessened as staff log books show that they consistently followed the guidance outlined in missing protocols.

Risks associated with both children's challenging behaviour escalated over time. The registered manager worked effectively with key safeguarding agencies to manage this risk. He continued to escalate his concerns to social workers and the police. As a result, both children were moved to alternative placements due to the high level of risk they were exposed to. These decisions were made to safeguard children and others. The registered manager's proactive and tenacious approach to this aspect of the children's care helped to keep the children as safe as possible.

Staff provided children with specialist help when necessary. They worked closely with partner agencies to offer support on a range of issues such as substance misuse, sexually inappropriate behaviour and gang association. This provided children with increased knowledge and skills to understand and manage the risks they were exposed to.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager knows children well and is committed to them. He leads an experienced and diverse staff team. Staff use team meetings to reflect on children's progress and develop their practice. They provide children with well thought-out, consistent care.

Staff benefit from access to a good training programme that equips them with the skills and knowledge they require. The registered manager ensures that training is in line with children's needs. For example, he recently arranged training on understanding the dangers of misusing substances and helping children who do so. In addition, the registered manager is keen to develop staff. Some are part of the company's internal progression programme while others benefit from internal promotion.

The registered manager offers staff regular supervision and appraisal. He has developed and improved the quality of supervision that staff receive. Staff feel supported by the registered manager and colleagues. They enjoy their role and offer child-centred care.

Staff have effective working relationships with a range of agencies. Overall, the registered manager is proactive and escalates concerns about children's welfare or shortfalls in their care. He is a strong advocate for children and ensures that their best interests are at the heart of staff practice.

The registered manager has good monitoring systems in place. Monthly reports cover key aspects of children's care. They identify patterns and trends of behaviour, which inform staff practice. The registered manager is keen to develop the service further. During inspection, the home was undergoing extensive redecoration throughout. This will give children a home to be proud of.

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 differences 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 whom 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 address: Lansdowne House, 85 Buxton Road, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 6LR

Responsible individual: Vivien Snape

Registered manager: Andrew Beechey

Inspector

Gareth Leckey, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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