

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	15/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC008486
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	Gary Wood
Inspector	Rebecca Quested

Inspection date	15/11/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Inadequate
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

SC008486

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- The registered manager is taking steps to address the significant shortfalls identified at the last inspection, but these improvements are at an embryonic stage.
- The registered manager's monitoring of the period of the last inspection fails to identify and evaluate the impact of the quality of care provided. Of the 15 discharges from the home, he identifies that 'only three have not been positive or planned'. This lacks any evaluation of or insight into young people's actual placement endings.
- As the registered manager fails accurately to monitor and evaluate the care provided in the quality of care report, he does not develop an action plan leading to continuous improvement.
- Staff do not robustly challenge the placing authority when its performance is inadequate for its role. Staff do not ensure that young people benefit from return interviews when they have been missing from home.
- Staff do not ensure that case records are always clearly legible. This is not helpful for young people, or other professionals, to understand their history.

The children's home strengths

- The registered person has introduced additional managerial structures which are supporting the registered manager to address shortfalls in the home.
- Staff receive additional behavioural management training to improve the quality of care that they provide. Consequently, staff develop positive relationships with the young person.
- The area manager is introducing more robust systems to structure the care that the young people receive. As a result, the young person is investing more in the home emotionally and is engaging in some educational activities.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met In order to engage with the wider system to ensure that children's needs are met, the registered person must ensure that staff— (c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans.	06/01/2017
The registered person must maintain records for each child which— (a) include the information and documents listed in schedule 3 in relation to each child; (b) are kept up to date; and (c) are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36(1))	06/01/2017
The registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— (a) the quality of care provided for children; and (b) any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45(2)(b))	06/01/2017

Recommendations

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

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care for six children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities. The home forms part of a large social care company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/09/2016	Full	Inadequate
02/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
07/07/2015	Full	Good
17/07/2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
Since the last inspection, one young person has left the home. This occurred in an unplanned way. The young person achieved his wish to return to his placing authority after several months of lack of progress. Following that inspection, the registered manager was not robust enough to challenge the placing authority to ensure that this departure took place in a planned way. The registered manager has not admitted any young people to the home, as agreed, following the last inspection. The area manager has introduced more robust impact risk assessment tools to ensure that the registered manager appropriately matches future placements with both the existing young person and the staff's abilities to meet their needs. The registered manager is committed to accepting planned placements initially. The registered manager has ensured that the young person in placement has made progress. Staff provide more structure to the daily routine to prepare the young person to return to attending school. Staff try to engage him in educational activities on a daily basis, with mixed results. He has attended museums and developed skills in cooking. Staff recorded in team meeting minutes that they: 'can walk him to the bus station to fill the time. We can use pretty much any activity as educational, from walks to shopping.' This reflects a lack of understanding of the purpose of educational activity. The registered manager has not ensured that a personal education plan is in place for the young person. Until the second day of the inspection, he did not have a written education plan in place for the young person. However, steps had been taken to liaise with the placing authority and the virtual school heads to secure an alternative school placement for the young person, which was due to commence the following week. The young person said: 'I am a bit ****ed off, as I should have started school yesterday. The staff keep ringing my social worker, but he hasn't called back. I have been doing maths and stuff with the staff. I went bowling with staff and my mum, and this week I am going to cook for her.' Staff develop positive relationships with the young person, who improves his engagement. They complete direct work with him regarding drug misuse and support him to attend a local drugs service. Although the young person engages, there is no progress in addressing his substance misuse, and he stated: 'I smoke cannabis every day. I don't come back stoned, as staff will take my spends away and supervise my contact. Staff do sessions on drugs with me – it's not making me stop, though.'	

Staff spend more time listening to the young person. They are aware of what is important to him through key-work sessions and young people's meetings. The area manager has introduced new systems which place the young person at the centre of what staff do. Staff do not always maintain boundaries consistently, which does not provide him with security. The registered manager is addressing this shortfall with individual staff members.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires Improvement
The area manager understands how to manage allegations and promptly referred an allegation made during the inspection to the designated officer. The registered manager states that he understands what constitutes an allegation and knows to refer it to the designated officer promptly. The registered manager has ensured that risk assessments are in place to reflect when staff should not undertake lone work with young people, following allegations made against a member of staff. This protects young people and staff. Staff have received behaviour management training. They develop positive relationships with the young person and there has been a reduction in the incidence of challenging behaviour. Staff understand how to use de-escalation techniques, and physical intervention has not been necessary since the last inspection. The registered manager has introduced a system whereby his area manager will review any physical interventions in which he is involved and also debrief him regarding the use of the intervention. Staff have called the police on only one occasion to manage a young person's behaviour. The young person was not criminalised and has accessed a course on knife crime to support his knowledge of the impact of this behaviour. Staff continue to respond appropriately when young people are missing from home. However, they do not ensure that young people benefit from an independent return interview. This represents a lack of progress in improving practice, as insufficient challenge to the placing authority is evident.	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The registered manager is receiving additional support to fulfil his role. An area manager provides supervision and support, and an operations manager undertakes much of the day-to-day running of the home. The registered manager continues to manage three children's homes. He spends more time at the home than was the case previously, providing more opportunity to oversee what is happening at the home. There has been progress in addressing the significant shortfalls identified at the last inspection. Since the last inspection, one young person has left the home. The registered manager did not ensure that this occurred in a planned way. Staff recorded asking the young person in his key-work session if he knew what was happening regarding his move, as they had been unable to contact the social worker. Staff suggested to the young person that he had an advocate and complained. Staff did not complain to the placing authority themselves, but kept recording how they were phoning the social worker with no response. The young person received a phone call from staff to tell him to return to the home, as he was to leave on the following day. This does not represent leaving the home in a planned way. The registered manager and staff reflected in a team meeting on the placement ending, stating that the 'social worker could have done more, staff continue what they are doing'. This lacks insight into their role of challenging the placing authority when its response is inadequate. This is replicated in their response to the social worker's failure to undertake independent return interviews. The registered manager does have a system in place to monitor the quality of care, but this fails to evaluate the quality of care provided to ensure that young people make progress against their plans and to improve the quality of care. He lacks insight into the impact of the care provided for the young people in the period reviewed. For example, one young person became increasingly aggressive towards staff and was restrained. Staff called the police, who arrested him for assault, criminal damage and racist behaviour. The police refused to bail the young person back to the home. Another young person was arrested by police for vandalism, assault and threats to stab. Police kept him in custody overnight and he was discharged to another provision. The registered manager makes no evaluation of how the care that young people receive in the home has impacted on their outcomes. For example, he states that there are few missing from home incidents, 'as most young people had "absconding" on their initial risk assessments'. This does not evaluate the effectiveness of staff's intervention when 'missing' behaviour results in young people taking life-threatening risks. The registered manager lays responsibility with	

the placing authority for 'letting young people down'. However, he does not recognise his role in challenging the placing authority when the young people's plans are not being furthered. This does not result in continuous improvements to the quality of care. He has no action plan within his quality of care report to drive forward improvements.

The registered manager does not accept the validity of the previous inspection. Staff recorded in the team meeting minutes their dissatisfaction with the inspection process and outcome, and this forms part of the quality of care report: 'Hopefully, a more balanced and realistic view will be given at the re-inspection.' This does not demonstrate that the registered manager has the insight to reflect on the impact of the care provided by the staff and leaders.

The registered manager has made some progress in addressing the shortfalls identified at the last inspection. He has concealed the graffiti-covered kitchen table with a cloth and the young person in placement has bought some posters for his room, although he told me that they keep falling down. The registered manager has also received supervision since the last inspection, records clearly demonstrate future actions for improvement.

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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