

SC008486

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

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

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 June 2017

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

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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.

Date of last inspection: 15 November 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Requires improvement

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- The registered manager does not make child-centred decisions about young people coming into the home. There have been 10 admissions since the last inspections and seven discharges. Some young people are admitted to the home in an emergency, on a respite basis or from other homes for a short period. This does not offer stability to the young people who live in the home.
- When young people are accepted in an emergency, the manager does not complete impact assessments prior to admission or have a system to ensure that the staff on shift know and understand the young person's individual risks and behaviours. This leaves young people at risk of harm.
- Because admissions are poorly planned, some young people are admitted without required medication and staff do not always have the full information required to identify young people's individual risks on admission, which has the potential to leave staff and other young people at risk of harm.
- Young people do not attend 25 hours of education per week and there is a lack of structure and informal learning when young people are not attending education.
- Some young people smoke in the home and staff do not have clear strategies to reduce the risk associated with this.
- The registered manager does not ensure that there is a system in place for senior managers to review the restraints that he is involved in. This is not safe practice for young people or for the registered manager.
- The manager is working on shift to address difficulties with staffing, which means that he does not have the necessary time to lead and manage the home effectively.
- The manager does not always challenge the local authority to ensure that each child's needs are met, in accordance with their plans. This is with regard to return interviews

The children's home's strengths:

- There is a new manager in post who has registered with Ofsted and who is realistic about the home's strengths and areas for development.
- Staff are proactive in working with families and promoting contact between young people and their families to ensure that young people maintain positive relationships with people who are important to them.

- Young people have positive relationships with staff, who spend time getting to know the young people.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/11/2016	Full	Requires improvement
20/09/2016	Full	Inadequate
02/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
07/07/2015	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
In order to meet the education standard, the registered provider must ensure that staff promote opportunities for each child to learn informally. (Regulation 8(2)(v))	15/08/2017
The health and well-being standard is that- the health and wellbeing needs of children are met. (Regulation 10(1)(a))	15/08/2017
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that helps children aspire to fulfil their potential and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose. Use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements to the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(2)(a)(h))	15/08/2017
The registered person must ensure that the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25(2)(b))	15/08/2017
The registered person must ensure that within 48 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so, has spoken to the user about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(b)(i))	15/08/2017

Recommendations

- To ensure that the registered manager and staff review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where

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

- When there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and 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, ensuring that risk assessments are accurate and up to date and put in place from admission to ensure that there is clear written guidance for staff on risks such as self-harm or fire starting.
- Evaluation of missing incidents should be undertaken to identify any gaps in training, skills or knowledge for staff or to record or retain evidence of what worked well. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 9.31, page 46)
- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', April 2015, page 45, paragraph 9.30)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, there have been 10 admissions and seven young people have been discharged from the home. Some young people are admitted in an emergency, some come from other homes within the organisation as a short-term measure and there has been one respite placement. As a result, some placements are short and unplanned, which does not contribute to a stable home environment for the young people already living in the home. The manager reported that he would rather take planned placements, as 'these kids coming in and out, it's not good for anybody'. However, he has not been able to action this and ensure that all young people receive well-planned care or that young people consistently make progress from their starting points.

Most young people receive some educational provision, although none of the young people attends 25 hours education per week. When young people are not in education, for example when they have been excluded from school, staff are proactive in liaising with educational professionals, such as the virtual head, to secure some form of educational provision, such as tutoring. They also attend meetings with education professionals to try to secure alternative educational provision.

'When young people are not attending school, staff do not consistently provide a sufficient level of structured activity or informal learning, particularly during the hours when they should be receiving formal education. There is evidence in young people's files of young people getting up late and watching TV with staff when they should be in education. This lack of structure and routine does not help young people understand the importance of education. One young person leaves the home most afternoons to spend unscheduled time with family members. His independent reviewing officer (IRO) reports that, 'X's safety is not secure at [name of home] due to him seeking unscheduled contact to his parents. I have raised this at each review because staff were transporting X daily to his parents, which I feel gives X a mixed message. As a consequence, X has not invested in his placement though he gets on OK with staff. Due to C spending all his time with his mother he is no longer attending education.'

Staff register young people with relevant health services on their arrival to the home, but do not always ensure that they are equipped to meet their health needs on admission. One young person was admitted to the home in an emergency without his attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medication. Staff did not take steps to obtain this for him and, as a result, he was not going to receive his medication until six days after his admission when the social worker attended for a rescheduled planning meeting. This does not demonstrate that staff are proactive in ensuring that young people's health needs are met.

Positive relationships were observed during the inspection between young people and staff. Most young people said that they like living in the home and they were positive about staff and the help that staff give them. One young person reported that, 'It's sweet; I get clothing money, go out when I want, I play pool with staff.' Young people feel safe living in the home and can identify a member of staff they can talk to if they have concerns. One independent reviewing officer (IRO) reported that, 'X appears to have good relationships with the staff team and told me he felt safe and most of the time was OK.'

Parents and most professionals gave positive feedback about the level of communication from the home. One parent commented, 'I think [name of home] is brilliant, staff have been always communicating with me and supporting me.'

Staff identify young people's individual interests and young people do engage in some activities and outings with staff, such as attending Jump Nation. Some young people engage in activities in the community, such as attending youth clubs. This gives young people the opportunity to learn skills and make social relationships out of the home.

Staff are proactive in promoting contact between young people and their families. Staff supervise contact when necessary and work well with local authorities to support increasing young people's contact with their families, with a view to them returning home. An IRO reported that, 'The manager has a good understanding of X and his family situation and appears to be doing his best to support and encourage family contact.' Consequently, young people maintain positive relationships with people who are

important to them.

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

Staff mostly identify individual risk and most risk assessments identify written actions for staff to take to reduce known risks. However, due to the emergency nature of some admissions, individual risks, such as self-harm or fire starting, are identified in referral documentation, but the manager has no system in place to ensure that the staff caring for the young person have read this and understand the individual risks of the young person they are looking after. As a result, staff do not always fully understand the risk factors or have written guidance which outlines the steps that they are expected to take to ensure that they keep young people safe from harm. This does not ensure that young people are kept safe.

Staff do not always identify individual risk factors when young people are admitted to the home. For example, one young person was admitted in an emergency without all of the relevant paperwork, which meant that staff were not aware until two weeks later that he had convictions for possession of offensive weapons. This means that the risk to staff and other young people is not fully assessed, leaving staff and young people at risk of harm.

Young people smoke in the home. One young person told me he had been smoking in his room and it was observed that he had covered his smoke alarm in his room with a sock. There are no clear strategies in place to address this. Staff report that they carry out bedroom checks daily, but these strategies are not effective in reducing this risk, which leaves young people and staff at risk of significant harm. Furthermore, there had been no fire evacuation carried out following a new young person being admitted to the home and fire safety checks are not undertaken consistently. The manager could not locate the fire policy, but it is recorded in the team-meeting minutes that staff fire checks should be carried out weekly and these have not taken place.

Staff have a good understanding of how young people's experiences and emotions can be communicated through behaviour. Staff are trained in BILD (British Institute of Learning Disabilities), which is the model that they are expected to use to manage challenging behaviour. The level of restraint used in the home is low. When restraint is undertaken, this is as a last resort and is in line with the legislative framework and staff ensure that young people are routinely debriefed afterwards. The registered manager, however, does not have a system in place to ensure that senior managers review his actions when he is involved in restraint. This practice does not safeguard young people or the registered manager. The manager's evaluation of restraint does not always include a robust evaluation of staff practice, which does not safeguard young people or staff.

Staff promote the use of positive behaviour through the use of clear rewards systems, which young people understand. Young people are involved in identifying which rewards and sanctions they feel would work and sanctions are proportionate and used

appropriately. This means that young people learn to link behaviour and consequences and, as a result, the home has been relatively settled in terms of challenging behaviour.

Staff are proactive when young people go missing. They search for young people to try to locate them as quickly as possible and promptly report young people missing to the police. Staff follow up missing episodes with key-work sessions with young people to help them understand the reasons why they are going missing and educate young people on the risks associated with this behaviour. Return interviews, however, are not consistently carried out and, when they have not been completed, the manager does not always escalate this with the local authority. The registered manager does not routinely evaluate missing episodes, which means that opportunities to understand and identify patterns of missing behaviour are missed.

Staff have all had safeguarding training. They understand and follow safeguarding procedures and notify Ofsted and the LADO when allegations are made, which ensures that young people in the home are kept safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The home is managed by a new manager who has recently been registered with Ofsted. He has not been a registered manager previously, but presents as motivated and focused on developing the home to improve outcomes for young people and improve the quality of the service. There have been some improvements in the quality of the service for young people since he has been in post, but these are still in the early stages.

The manager has been covering shifts in the home to cover staff shortages and sickness. Furthermore, the manager has also been involved in undertaking outreach work to try to support a young person returning home. This is work that the local authority had identified they would complete and instead of challenging the local authority to ensure that they provide the support required, in accordance with the young person's plans, the registered manager has been undertaking some of this work himself. This, and the fact that he is covering shifts, prevents him from having the necessary time to lead and manage the home effectively, which has led to some of the shortfalls identified during the inspection.

The home is not meeting all of its objectives as set out in the statement of purpose, which states that with admissions, consideration will be given to any children who are already living in the home. The manager does not evidence that he considers the young people already living in the placement when admitting new young people to the home. Impact risk assessments are poor and they lack sufficient detail about young people's individual risks and behaviour, making it difficult to assess the impact that their behaviour may have on other young people already resident in the home. For example, one young person admitted to the home was identified as being at risk of drug running, and had a conviction for possession of class A drugs with intent to supply, but the manager failed to evaluate the impact of this on another young person in the home who also uses drugs.

Staff like working in the home, feel well supported and are positive about the changes that are taking place. Staff receive regular supervision from the registered manager to support them in their role.

Staff receive regular and relevant training in areas such as anger management and self-harm. This ensures their ongoing development and equips staff with the knowledge and skills they need in order to meet the needs of the young people they look after.

Young people do have good opportunities to have their say on matters which are important to them through young people's meetings and key-work sessions. Their views are obtained on areas such menu choices and what activities they would like to attend, which ensures that young people feel listened to in the home.

Staff make good efforts to try to work with stakeholders such as the police and social workers. Feedback from professionals about the level of communication from the home is mainly positive. One IRO commented that, 'Their communication has been good and they attended X's LAC review.' Another commented that, 'On a positive note, the staff have communicated well with myself.' The manager is proactive in obtaining feedback from professionals and parents.

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, 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: SC008486

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: Ryan Knight

Inspector

Sarah Billett: social care inspector

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