

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	20/09/2016
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	20/09/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC008486

Summary of findings

The children's home's provision is inadequate because:

- The registered manager does not ensure that young people receive effectively planned care into or from the home as in the past six months there have been 17 young people admitted to, and 15 discharged from, the home.
- The registered manager accepts young people into the home without sufficient information to assess the risks to other young people, staff or to the young people themselves. He fails to challenge local authorities effectively to elicit the information and child looked after documents that he needs to undertake an impact risk assessment.
- Young people's experiences are poor and they do not make progress. Few young people receive education or engage with activities within the home or local community.
- Young people do not emotionally invest in the home. Staff do not develop positive relationships with young people. They are unable to engage them and fail to consider the impact of their experiences on their behaviour. Young people consequently spend most of their time away from the home where some engage in high-risk behaviours and crime. Others place themselves at risk by returning to areas where they involve themselves in gang-related crime or are at risk of violence from those whom they owe money.
- Staff are unable to manage young people's behaviour. They lack the skills to de-escalate situations effectively. As a result, young people are criminalised when the police become involved.
- Young people do not feel safe or listened to. Staff are unable to engage young people in developing independence and life skills, attending education or in expressing their wishes and feelings. Young people are unable to discuss difficult issues with staff.
- The registered manager and staff do not recognise what constitutes an allegation and how to manage allegations effectively.
- The registered manager does not ensure that there is a system in place so that restraints he is involved in are reviewed. He does not review the behaviour management policy when restraints regularly result in high-level interventions in which young people are restrained to the floor.
- Young people's files are not well structured and recording is illegible which means that they will not make sense to young people now or in the future.
- The registered manager has not ensured that Ofsted has been notified in a timely manner when significant events occur.
- The registered manager does not receive regular professional supervision. The last recorded supervision is February 2016. This does not provide him

with the support to reflect on and review his performance.

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
*14: The care planning standard In order to ensure that the care planning standard is met, the registered provider must ensure that: (1)(a) children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home, and (b) have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (2)(b) that arrangements are in place to: (i) ensure the effective induction of each child into the home (ii) manage and review the placement of each child in the home.	11/11/2016
*13: The leadership and management standard (1) The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that: (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential, and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to: (a) 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.	11/11/2016
12: The protection of children standard The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered provider must ensure that: (2)(b) the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as	11/11/2016

to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm.	
11: The positive relationships standard The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on: (a) mutual respect and trust (b) an understanding about acceptable behaviour, and (c) positive responses to other children and adults. In order to meet the positive relationship standard, the registered provider must ensure that staff: (2)(a)(ix) understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children (xi) de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children.	11/11/2016
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: (d) 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. (e)	11/11/2016
*The registered person must ensure that the policy is implemented of the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse and neglect, in particular the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located. (Regulation 34 (2)(b))	11/11/2016
*The registered person must provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse and the action taken in response. (Regulation 34 (2)(d))	11/11/2016
7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard	11/11/2016

The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who: (a) develop positive relationships with them (b) engage with them, and (c) take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, the registered provider must ensure that staff: (2)(a)(ii) help each child to express their wishes and feelings, and (2)(c)(iv) regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care.	
6: The quality and purpose of care standard The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who: (1)(a) understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children. (b) use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard the registered provider must ensure that staff: (2)(b)(vi) help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult (2)(c) ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to: (i) meet the needs of each child.	11/11/2016
*8: The education standard The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving educational potential and are helped to do so. In order to meet the education standard, the registered provider must ensure that: (viii) staff help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible.	11/11/2016

The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. (Regulation 35 (2))	11/11/2016
The registered person must ensure that within 48 hours of the use of the measure of control, discipline or restraint, the registered person or the authorised person or a person authorised by the registered person to do so has spoken to the user about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i))	11/11/2016
The registered person must maintain records for each child which: (a) include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to a child (b) are kept up to date, and (c) are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1))	11/11/2016
The registered provider must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision. In particular, the registered manager. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))	11/11/2016
The registered provider must notify HMCI without delay if there is any incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	11/11/2016

* These requirements are subject to statutory requirement notice.

Recommendations

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

- When a child returns to the home after being missing, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

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
02/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
07/07/2015	Full	Good
17/07/2014	Full	Adequate
29/05/2014	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
Most young people's experiences of living at the home are poor and they are not making progress. There are widespread failings as young people are admitted to the home whom staff are unable to keep safe or whose needs cannot be met. This results in very short placements with poor outcomes for young people involved. Two young people have been admitted to the home from secure environments, one as an emergency. They present with high-risk behaviours, which staff are unable to manage. Consequently, young people go missing and engage in known risks, which place their lives at risk. Young people's care is not well planned. Young people arrive in an unplanned way, with most admissions occurring on an emergency basis. The registered manager does not ensure that a meeting always takes place within 72-hour of an admission. Opportunities are therefore lost to develop a comprehensive understanding of young people's needs. Some young people's admissions occur while they are missing and their belongings are transferred to the home in their absence, and others living at the home are arrested by the police and do not return to the home. This does not promote young people's understanding about why change is happening or their self-esteem. Most young people do not engage with staff or develop positive relationships with them. One young person said, 'Staff are not interested in me. They treat this like their home and put the TV on and do nothing.' Young people's views are not elicited effectively by staff who frequently record that young people 'refuse to engage'. One parent said: 'The home lets him come up here every single day, he is still associating with the same people who he was moved away from... the only thing he does is sleep there... it's not homely. I understand why he is bored as there is nothing for him to do.' Young people do not develop a sense of permanence and do not want to remain living in the home. Staff are not effective in engaging young people in activities within or outside the home. Young people do not develop their interests or hobbies or invest in the local community. Young people do not attend school or other educational provision. Most young people do not live in the home for long enough for an education placement to be identified and the engagement of young people with the in-house tutor is not consistent and does not meet young people's needs. A youth offending service worker said: 'The tutor was one size fits all... it was not tailored to meet his needs and he was not stimulated.' Staff do not have a clear educational plan in place or engage young people in educational activities while an education or training placement is being identified.	

Staff do not ensure that young people develop their independent living skills. When young people are reluctant to engage, they record: 'independence file offered, refused to engage', with no evidence that staff use their skills to consider alternative strategies. The registered manager does not ensure that staff support young people to understand the consequences of their unsafe behaviour. Of one young person who was at high risk of involvement with gang-related crime, the registered manager said: 'The youth offending team does that and we try and entertain him. He was signed up for a football team but never went.' This represents a failure to support the development of positive relationships with other young people.

Case records are not always legible, which means that they will not make sense to young people now or in the future. The registered manager has not ensured that all child looked after documentation is held regarding each young person, which prevents him from understanding their needs and behaviour as well as the local authority care plan.

Staff promote contact between young people and their families and develop positive working relationships with parents.. They develop positive professional relationships with some stakeholders who report that they have achieved short-term stability for their young person.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
Young people do not report feeling safe living in the home. They report telling the registered manager about incidents which make them feel unsafe and no action is taken. They do not feel secure and say they are bullied at the home Staff state that this is being addressed. However, young people describe this as an ongoing problem. Young people move into the home without staff having sufficient information to understand the risks associated with them. Where they do understand risks they are not addressed robustly. For example, young people are placed with others who are known to target younger young people to exploit and bully them. The matching of young people is not sufficiently robust and the registered manager fails to challenge placing authorities to ensure that he has sufficient information to make an adequate assessment of how young people may interact together. Some young people are criminalised when staff are unable to manage their	

behaviour. Staff are not able to de-escalate situations effectively and consequently young people are able to harm staff and cause damage to the home. Some young people are arrested and are then unable to return to the home. Their outcomes are poor as they commit offences and experience further placement moves.

Staff provide a well-coordinated response when young people go missing. They contact the police and local authority and attempt to maintain contact with young people and their families. They also look for young people in familiar places. Staff do not ensure that return interviews are consistently offered and recording is unclear as to who has come to the home to complete these interviews. Staff do not identify patterns of missing behaviour which young people develop and these are lost opportunities to review risk assessments and take robust action to keep them safe. On occasion, when the police call the home to let them know a young person who is missing has contacted them, staff send a taxi to pick them up from where they are waiting instead of collecting him themselves. Some young people engage in high-risk behaviours while they are missing, which puts their lives at risk and results in them returning quickly to secure environments. This does not safeguard young people or promote their welfare.

Positive behaviour is not consistently promoted. Staff do not use de-escalation techniques effectively and there is no evidence that young people are involved in developing alternative strategies to manage their behaviour. The registered manager reviews incidents, although there is no evaluation of the consistent use of high-level restraints to the floor. Staff record that they discuss the use of restraint each time with young people but there is the same response recorded on each occasion: 'refused to engage'. When the registered manager is involved in restraint there is no system in place to ensure that his actions are reviewed. This practice does not safeguard young people or the registered manager.

The registered manager does not respond promptly to allegations against members of staff. There has been one allegation recorded since the last inspection, which was referred to the designated officer by an advocate and not the staff. This remains under investigation and a no lone working arrangement is in place for the member of staff involved, but this is not recorded in young people's risk assessments. Young people and social workers report that other allegations are made, which are not reported or managed as such. This does not safeguard young people.

The registered manager does not ensure that significant events are notified to Ofsted in a timely manner. This delays the opportunity for the regulator to monitor patterns or trends.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
Most young people do not make progress from their starting points. There have been 17 admissions to the home in six months. This does not promote young people's security and sense of belonging. The registered manager does not give priority to maintaining a positive group environment when considering new young people being admitted to the home and placements are ended when staff are unable to manage young people's behaviour. His impact risk assessment is a tick box exercise, with no evaluation of the impact or how any risks to that young person, the group or staff will be ameliorated. Most young people's placements are very short, from a few days to a few weeks. The registered manager does not ensure that the home is run in accordance with its statement of purpose, which is to provide a warm, friendly, safe and supportive environment, based on nurturing principles and which uses positive behaviour modification, setting goals and rewarding behaviour. Staff do not engage in positive reinforcing behaviour, but rather focus on negative behaviour that has taken place, which results in young people's behaviour spiralling negatively. One young person said: 'The staff don't do much but wind you up.' The registered manager said: 'With the amount of young people that have come through, I suppose you don't invest, you don't give it 1001% as you know it is a short term placement.' The home does not have any pictures of young people on display or any evidence that they invest in the home, including in their bedrooms, which are lacking any personal belongings. The kitchen table has been written on repeatedly with graffiti. This does not present a homely family environment. The home is managed by a permanent registered manager who has the necessary experience and qualifications to manage the home. He has been in post since 2007 and holds a level 4 diploma in leadership and management. He ensures that the home is staffed by a stable staff team. Currently all the staff are male, with few female staff working in the home in the last six months, apart from a female cleaner. This does not promote positive role models for young people. The registered manager manages two other local homes but spends insufficient time in this home to have effective oversight. Case recording is poor and does not reflect young people's achievements or provide clarity about young people's histories, experiences or backgrounds. Many records are illegible, making them of little value now or in the future.	

Staff receive regular supervision and appraisal. They take part in regular team meetings although these are not used effectively to evaluate the quality of care being provided, or to identify how they can improve. They detail young people's poor outcomes without considering the impact the home has had on their progress. There is no record of the registered manager receiving any formal professional supervision in the last seven months. This does not ensure that there is an opportunity for the manager to reflect on developments within the home or to reflect on the impact of so many placements and the reasons for their breakdown. This prevents the quality of care improving.

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 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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