

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	18/06/2015
Unique reference number	SC008490
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Stepping Stones Children's Services Limited
Registered person address	Keys Attachment Centre, Hurstwood Court, New Hall Hey Road, ROSSENDALE, Lancashire, BB4 6HR

Responsible individual	Mrs Heather Laffin
Registered manager	Mrs Sylvia Eboigbe
Inspector	Miss Ceri Evans

Inspection date	18/06/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	Full
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

SC008490

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- Not all staff provide care and support in line with the ethos of the home. This has resulted in some staff being less able to promote and protect the welfare of young people.
- Staff have not always successfully managed incidents of challenging behaviour. On at least one occasion this significantly compromised the safety of young people in the home.
- Staff are not trained in E-safety and there is little evidence of the work undertaken with young people to ensure they know how to keep themselves safe.
- E-safety guidance is not reflected in young people's risk assessments. This means that staff are not fully equipped to safeguard young people from the risk presented when using the internet.
- Some young people have experienced significant disruption in their education. This has impacted on their overall educational progress.
- Generally staffing is sufficient. However there is not a clear system in place to adapt staffing numbers to when young people are in crisis.
- Staff do not always respond appropriately to incidents where the health and safety of children may be compromised.
- Young people have been able to gain access to dangerous equipment, such as DIY tools because they have not been kept in a secure place.

The children's home strengths

As noted above, the overall judgement of requires improvement is as a direct result of one incident where the wellbeing and safety of young people was seriously compromised. That being said, the inspection also highlighted many strengths that will be outlined within the report.

Summary of key strengths:

- Young people are generally positive about the quality of care and feel that staff are interested and concerned about their welfare. They have positive relationships with their key workers and feel able to express themselves in an assertive manner.
- Not all young people have made good progress in their education but staff continue to work proactively with education providers to meet the complex needs of the young people. This includes regular contact with teachers, attending meetings and ensuring that there is structured work in place for them to do with young people within the home.
- Most young people are growing in confidence in the community and have many positive relationships with friends and family.
- Young people enjoy a wide range of social activities. This includes day trips out, playing sports, going to the cinema and annual holidays. This promotes inclusion of young people in the wider community.
- Young people are steadily developing the skills needed for adulthood and are well supported to gain confidence about their ability to move on to the next stage of their life.
- Staff confirm they receive good support from their manager, both informally and through supervision and de-brief process.

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
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— (d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; This specifically relates to having a robust contingency plans when additional staff are required.	31/07/2015
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— (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; This is specifically in relation to ensuring that staff have the opportunity to attend online safety training.	31/07/2015

12: The protection of children standard (1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (b) that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; This is specifically in relation to the managing the risks presented by young people's behaviour.	31/07/2015
12: The protection of children standard (1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (d) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. This specifically relates to ensuring that dangerous equipment such as garden equipment and DIY tools are secured appropriately.	31/07/2015
The registered person must ensure that within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(c))	31/07/2015

Recommendations

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

- The home should consider whether and how it can support the child to access a computer and the internet safely. This specifically relates to ensuring that risks relating to e-safety is reflected in young people's records. (The Guide page 29 5.19)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run home which is part of a national organisation. It provides care for up to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/01/2015	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
30/07/2014	CH – Full	Outstanding
10/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	requires improvement
Young people's experiences and progress are variable. For some, their progress is dependent on their emotional stability and willingness to engage with staff. Although some young people express negative feelings towards some staff they are able to name others who they can relate to and who they feel are more concerned about their care. These issues are being addressed through team meetings and supervision. The team are able to reflect upon dynamics and constantly look at ways of improving relationships. Evidence gathered at this inspection suggests that staff remain positive about their role and the young people even through difficult times. Most young people say that the care and support they receive from staff is good. A young person said 'I really like my key worker, we talk about things, go on activities together and he helps me calm down when I'm not ok.' Professionals have also been complimentary about staff and the support they provide to young people. A placing social worker commented that a good thing about this home is 'that staff have helped (name) engage in therapy, whilst this directly correlates with an increase in incidents the team have remained committed. I have observed that (name) has good relationships with staff and he is well supported.' Positive relationships formed between staff and young people have nurtured some good outcomes and helped stabilise their lives over time. However, in recent months some relationships within the home have come under strain. Contributing factors include an increase in some young people's challenging behaviour. This has impacted on the effectiveness of some of the management strategies. To some extent behaviour management has been less than robust which has affected the group dynamics in the home. Not all young people have made educational progress. Some young people have enjoyed good educational attainment, while others' progress has declined over time. This limits their potential to achieve and hinders opportunity for them to improve their life chances. That being said, the home has strong partnerships with education and they do promote high expectations to help young people get back on track. The team also ensure young people have access to education materials to support their learning in the home and take part in social activities, which also supports their learning outside of school time. A range of stimulating and age appropriate social activities are provided to young people. Staff fully consult with them regarding what they would like to do each	

week and for their annual holiday. Popular pastimes include, rugby club, cadets, shopping and trips to places of interest. This ensures that young people are fully integrated into their community which promotes their sense of belonging and self-worth.

Young people are effectively prepared for successful adult life in line with their age and cognitive ability. They develop specific skills in shopping and money management and all young people are encouraged to prepare food with staff and take responsibility for setting the table and tidying up after meals. This level of engagement contributes positively to young people's social skills and enables them to develop the necessary emotional and practical skills, which is good preparation for adult life.

Young people are listened to and are actively involved in decision-making about their care. They are also involved in shaping the design and delivery of services. They have their own development plan called 'operation sparkle' which enables them to have a meaningful say about what is important to them. Other methods of consultation include regular home meetings, individual sessions with their key worker and access to independent advocacy.

The home's complaints process is robust. Young people are clear about how to make a complaint and can identify trusted adults they feel confident to speak with about any issues they may have. When complaints have been made they have been taken seriously and dealt with promptly. Staff ensure that young people understand the process and any resulting actions or outcomes following their complaint.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
Evidence gathered at this inspection highlights that the home has experienced a period of instability and crisis over recent months. The manager has taken action to address these issues and greater consideration has been given to improving the current dynamics between young people. Young people that generally they feel safe in the home. However, there has been at least one incident whereby behaviour management was ineffective. This directly impacted on young people's safety and wellbeing. While young people are encouraged to behave positively and individualised incentive charts have been implemented to help them achieve this, the effectiveness of behaviour management strategies has been variable. This has led	

to incidents of anti-social behaviour both within the home and the local community. Not all staff are confident or competent in dealing with these issues. For example, there was a recent incident whereby young people damaged property, kicked doors down, threatened each other and barricaded themselves in bedrooms. This was not responded to appropriately leading to the police being called to help manage the situation. That said, the manager immediately investigated the matter and took the necessary action to formulate a strategy to minimise the risk of this happening again.

Good safeguarding arrangements are in place when young people go missing from the home. Staff actively discourage young people from leaving the home through discussion and positive affirmations. They also actively search for young people when they are missing or have unauthorised absences. In recent weeks young people have taken part in missing from care training with staff. This provided them with an opportunity to reflect upon the risks they expose themselves to when they go missing.

Records of direct work sessions following an episode of being missing from home are maintained and return interviews are undertaken by an independent person. Staff ensure that follow up sessions help young people reflect and develop alternative coping strategies. That said, missing episodes have increased which has placed young people at risk of exploitation, offending and being involved in anti-social behaviour. This is something the manager is very aware of and planning strategies agreed with the placing authorities are reviewed on a regular basis.

Evidence gathered at this inspection highlights that physical intervention is used, but only as a last resort. Restraint is used appropriately and is sensitively discussed after the event to encourage the young person to consider their actions. However, the manager has not consistently documented that she has spoken with the young people following the incident. Records made in this way do not stand up to scrutiny in the event of a complaint.

There are effective and well-embedded working relationships with a range of safeguarding agencies. This is confirmed in comments made by various professionals such as 'In respect of this home we have regular contact with the manager and staff, they consult with the safeguarding team in respect of any concerns and report allegations in a timely manner . I always find them open and honest and willing to work in partnership.' Social workers also comment positively about the level of communication they have with staff and state 'the level of information sharing is very good. I am kept fully informed and receive regular updates. Staff phone or email me if they have any concerns. The team make sure I am kept in the loop.'

The home does have a suitable on-line safety policy and staff understand the potential dangers associated with technology. The home computer has protection software and mobile phones are routinely monitored by staff. However, there is

little evidence of the work undertaken with young people to ensure they know how to keep themselves safe. Furthermore, specific E-safety guidance is not consistently recorded in young people's risk assessments or discussed in young people's meetings. This is not in keeping with their policy. Staff have also not attended online safety training. This means that staff are not fully equipped to safeguard young people from the risk presented when using the internet.

There are some shortfalls in the arrangements for ensuring the physical environment is safe and secure. For example, young people have been able to gain access to potentially dangerous equipment such as screwdrivers and garden tools. The manager has addressed this and a clear plan is in place to ensure such equipment is kept in a secure place.

As much as possible is done to verify the suitability of people working in the home. Vetting and safer recruitment practice is thorough and robust in order to prevent unsuitable people from applying for the role. During this inspection period several allegations have been made. Investigations into allegations or concerns about staff practice are handled fairly, quickly and consistently, and in consultation with appropriate external agencies. This provides effective protection for young people, and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
The Registered Manager has been in post since February 2011. She has recently been promoted within the company and will maintain senior management responsibility for the home. The deputy manager has undertaken the day to day responsibility for the home. She is in the process of applying to register with Ofsted. The deputy manager is suitably qualified and is an experienced residential child care worker. She is well known and respected by the young people and the staff team alike. Staff comment that managers are approachable, supportive and lead by example. They demonstrate good leadership and motivational qualities and ensure staff are regularly supervised, trained and supported to fulfil their specific roles and responsibilities. Leaders, managers and the team acknowledge that this has been a very difficult time but feel things are 'on the up again.' Staff spoken with during the inspection expressed dedication to their role and acknowledged the challenges of recent months. In discussion it was apparent that staff understood the complexities of the young people placed and are committed to learning and moving on positively from recent events.	

The service now has an established core staff team which is suitably diverse and experienced. Most of the staff are qualified to an appropriate level. Staffing levels during the day is sufficient. However, on at least one occasion there was not enough staff on duty at night. This led to young people's challenging behaviour not being effectively managed. This has been addressed by the manager. There is a system in place to assess and implement additional staffing if required.

The home development plan includes an improvement agenda. The plan reflects the current services and objectives for the coming year. Managers have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and services provided which supported the updating of the Statement of Purpose.

Parts of the home have undergone damaged following disruptive behaviour. The manager has addressed these issues promptly and repair work has now taken place, with further work being undertaken during the inspection. The bedrooms and communal areas have recently been decorated and reflect the occupants' personalities and interests. This means the environment continues to be well presented and has a homely atmosphere.

The home's notification system is robust. Leaders and managers fully co-operate with external professionals such as the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the police and health professionals. The manager also ensures that Ofsted are kept informed of serious incidents relating to the safety and wellbeing of young people. This enables the regulator to effectively carry out its safeguarding responsibilities to ensure that young people are protected from harm.

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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