

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	26/07/2016
Unique reference number	SC008490
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Stepping Stones Children's Services Limited
Registered provider address	Keys Attachment Centre, Hurstwood Court, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancashire BB4 6HR

Responsible individual	Julie Hamilton
Registered manager	Sylvia Eboigbe
	Claire Brady
Inspector	Ceri Evans

Inspection date	26/07/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC008490

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Staff actively engage with young people to ensure that their education and healthcare needs are fully considered and met. Young people are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and benefit from regular school attendance.
- Young people are able to talk about what is difficult for them. They can identify trusted staff to speak to and they respond well to therapeutic and practical support offered by staff.
- Staff work in a non-judgemental way and respect young people as individuals. They are resilient and show a great deal of perseverance when managing young people's occasionally challenging and confrontational behaviour.
- Detailed risk assessments and behaviour management plans underpin staff practice.
- Staff are led by an enthusiastic and motivated manager. She is child focused and has high aspirations for young people. Staff feel valued and share the manager's vision to improve the life experiences of young people.
- The manager provides staff with relevant training, support and supervision to enable them to meet the needs of the young people.
- However, there are some weaknesses in leadership and management. The areas for improvement identified as a result of this inspection are as follows:
 - Managers do not have robust systems in place to tackle shortfalls in documentation. For example, review minutes and local authority care plans are out of date.
 - The registered person did not request a care plan review for a young person who was persistently absent from the home without permission.
 - Consultation with stakeholders is not robust. The manager does not have an effective system to evaluate and analyse feedback from parents, social workers and other professionals.
 - Finally, leaders and managers must ensure that arrangements are in place to maintain effective management when the manager is absent, off duty or on leave.

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
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must— (2)(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. This is with specific reference to evaluating feedback provided by parents, professionals and young people.	21/09/2016
14: The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard, with particular reference to ensuring that children receive care that is well planned, the registered person must ensure that— (2)(e) the child's placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child's relevant plans is requested, if— (i) the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child's needs; (ii) the child is, or has been, persistently absent from the home without permission.	21/09/2016
36: Children's case records The registered person must maintain records for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3. The registered person must ensure that these records are kept up to date. (Regulation 36(1)(a)(b))	21/09/2016

Recommendations

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

of the following recommendation(s):

- Each home must have clear arrangements in place to maintain effective management when the manager is absent, off duty or on leave. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run home that 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
11/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/06/2015	Full	Requires improvement
06/01/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/07/2014	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Staff provide nurturing care for the young people in line with the home's statement of purpose. Staff recognise the impact of young people's early life experiences on their behaviour and presentation. They work hard to provide a secure and reliable base from which young people can make progress in addressing what is difficult for them. Despite some changes in staffing, the core team has remained the same. This provides continuity of care and has enabled young people to maintain meaningful daily contact with adults whom they trust and know well. Staff support young people to attend education, and they make good progress, with much improved levels of attendance and engagement. Taking starting points into consideration, young people make significant progress and are developing their academic abilities and workplace skills. For example, one young person has achieved entry level in all core subjects after a prolonged absence from school. Another young person has successfully completed work experience at a local salon. He has since secured a part-time job at the same salon because of his positive attitude to work. Staff use opportunities in the home to reinforce the young people's learning, for example, by encouraging young people to practise the skills they have learned during the day at home. Young people's successes in education have undoubtedly enhanced their confidence and self-belief, which is a good foundation for future prospects. Staff ensure that young people's healthcare needs are met. The young people receive primary care and specialist services, as required. Staff respond well to young people's mental health needs. They listen carefully and support young people to access appropriate support. Staff receive regular consultation from the in-house therapy team to develop behaviour management strategies that support young people in managing their emotions. This enables staff to learn more about how to manage young people's complex presentation and emotional health needs. Staff prepare young people well for the transition to young adulthood. They all work together to support young people to make progress in developing independence skills. As a result, young people develop practical skills in cooking, cleaning and completing their laundry. They also develop emotional resilience and are now more able to manage day-to-day life with reduced levels of staffing. A	

social worker commented: 'The young person has had his ups and downs but the team have stuck with him – they've been there for the long game and stuck with it. At one time he was very angry and was deliberately falling out with staff to provoke a reaction. He is now more settled and in a happier place. Staff clearly know him well and supported him throughout. They have shown commitment and stuck with it. He is steadily becoming more independent and is enjoying reduced staffing levels. He has told me that when he leaves he wants to stay in the area. This is because he wants to be near staff. He has made it very clear that he is settled and has a clear sense of belonging to staff and the area.'

Staff ensure that young people have every opportunity to enjoy a wide range of activities with their friends and family, for example through day trips to places of interest, visits to local attractions and meals out. One young person recently enjoyed his holiday to Greece as a reward for continued positive behaviour. He said: 'My holiday was brilliant. I agreed an incentive plan with the manager and I stuck with it for ages. We had a fab time and I am now saving up to go to Portugal!' There is no doubt that such experiences promote confidence and enhance social skills, as well as providing young people with similar experiences and opportunities as their peers enjoy.

Young people are clear about how to make a complaint should they have any concerns. The manager has effective systems to ensure that any complaints or grumbles are dealt with and resolved in a timely manner. Regular consultation with the manager, access to independent advocates and attendance at house meetings ensure that young people are given opportunities to express their views and opinions.

The home is well maintained and spacious, and provides a welcoming environment. There is enough space for both communal activity and privacy. The building is situated in an area that is convenient for public transport and local amenities. This means that young people can access a broad range of services to meet their individual needs and engage in their chosen activities.

	Judgement grade
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Some young people have made significant progress in identifying and reducing their risk-taking behaviour. For example, one young person who had a history of going missing on a daily basis has not left the home without authorisation for over nine months. There has also been a reduction in incidents of disruptive and negative behaviour. The staff team's knowledge of young people has undoubtedly helped them to develop strategies to address and reduce negative behaviours. Strategies include helping young people to understand their emotions and triggers, and the impact their behaviour has on their safety and the safety of others. Young people acknowledge that they used to put themselves in some risky and dangerous situations. They acknowledge their progress, as a result of which they are making increasingly safer choices. Unfortunately, this success is not mirrored by all young people and the home has had an unsettled period, with some exhibiting challenging and often risky behaviour, such as going missing from home regularly. When young people do go missing, staff respond promptly and are resourceful in seeking them out. They make a concerted effort to keep in contact and locate them as quickly as possible. However, the manager did not sufficiently escalate her concerns regarding risk management with the placing authority through a formal review of the young person's care plan. This resulted in unnecessary delays, which compounded an already difficult situation in the home. More robust care planning and timely decision making could have improved the safety of young people at the home. The leadership team has fully acknowledged this shortfall and is taking the necessary action to review plans. More positively, good arrangements are in place for missing-from-home return interviews. The manager ensures that these are undertaken by an independent person after every missing episode. This is a key opportunity to gather information, help everyone understand the push-pull factors in episodes of going missing, and in encouraging young people to make safer choices in the future. This staff team continues to de-escalate some extremely challenging behaviours. The team is growing in competence and confidence to enable vulnerable young people to take age-appropriate risks as part of their development into adulthood. Overall, physical intervention has reduced. However, when it is used, it is well managed and thoroughly documented. Staff undertake lots of direct work to help young people learn more socially acceptable behaviours. Over time, this will help to	

improve their future prospects.

Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding, and understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping young people safe. Established systems are appropriately followed in response to any arising allegations, unsafe practice or suspicion of abuse. A safeguarding professional said: 'The manager takes action, seeks advice when needed and has good allegation management systems in place.' This demonstrates that the manager ensures that relevant partner agencies are informed and that appropriate action is taken.

Young people are further protected by robust selection and recruitment procedures for staff. This ensures that they are not exposed to adults who may pose a risk to their welfare.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The manager was registered with Ofsted in February 2016. She has the appropriate qualifications and experience for the role. Staff and young people spoken with during the inspection express satisfaction at the support they receive from the manager. Comments included: 'She is very supportive and I know I can approach her at any time.' While some good practice is noted, there are some weaknesses in the effectiveness of leadership and management that require improvement. The manager has had to take on board a lot of responsibility and learning in a short space of time, and although she receives regular supervision, she does not have the day-to-day support of a deputy manager. As a result, the home does not have clear arrangements in place to maintain effective day-to-day leadership when the manager is absent. This became evident earlier in the year when the manager had an unexpected leave of absence. Records were not maintained to the same standard, monitoring was ineffective and senior care workers did not have the autonomy to make decisions. Senior leaders swiftly recognised this shortfall and are in the process of identifying appropriate contingency plans to avoid a reoccurrence. Staff performance is routinely monitored and developed through purposeful appraisals, supervision and support. The majority of staff have a relevant childcare	

qualification, and those who have not are in the process of completing one. The organisation has a training plan and the manager ensures that mandatory training is always kept up to date. The manager is keen to ensure that staff understand the theory behind practice and makes full use of additional training and consultation offered by the therapy team. This ensures that staff have the right set of skills and knowledge to meet the individual needs of young people.

Leaders and managers foster a clear determination, energy and motivation to improve the home. This is an ethos the team embraces. While good progress is noted, there are some key shortfalls. For example, the systems to tackle gaps in documentation are not robust. Records, such as statutory review minutes and care plans, are not up to date. While some efforts have been taken to obtain these, further escalation is required. More positively, staff seek to minimise the impact of this shortfall by using their own records of the agreed care plan, and these are generally written to a good standard.

The independent visitor comes to the home every month. They produce a report of their findings with actions as required. In the temporary absence of the manager, some of the recommendations were not actioned in a timely manner. This decreases the effectiveness of the independent visitor and does not drive improvements. However, since the manager's return, there has been a marked improvement and shortfalls are acted upon quickly. The manager's report on the quality of care offers a lot of detail and provides some analysis and evaluation of the quality of care young people receive. However, current systems to gather the views of parents and professionals are ineffective. Feedback forms are generated from head office and the information that is returned is not readily available to the manager. This does not assist the manager in understanding the effectiveness of the home's approach to securing improved outcomes for young people.

The home's statement of purpose is up to date and accurately reflects the current aims, objectives, practices and staffing of the home. Similarly, the young people's guide helps young people to know how they will be supported, what their rights are and what services they can expect to receive. Both documents are reviewed regularly and the manager ensures that relevant parties are notified of any changes.

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 the '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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