

SC014235

Registered provider: Lioncare Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home can accommodate up to seven children and young people. The service aims to accommodate children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and provides a therapeutic care approach towards meeting their needs. The home is part of an organisation which has three residential homes and a school.

Inspection dates: 2 to 3 October 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 8 June 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

A restriction of accommodation notice and seven compliance were issued following the inspection in June 2017. The restriction of accommodation notice was subsequently withdrawn and all of the steps in the compliance notices have now been met.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- There is a detailed home improvement plan, which has been effective in improving standards across most areas of practice.
- Managers have amended existing quality of care monitoring systems and these are now more effective. New monitoring systems are being introduced.
- Care planning now reflects the placing authority's long term goals for the child, and is focused on helping children achieve permanency in their lives.
- Effective communication with education professionals ensures that children are supported to engage positively with their education provision.
- There are well-planned strategies for promoting positive behaviour and resolving conflict among the children.
- Children receive the support they need to maintain good physical and mental health.
- There are good opportunities for children to express their views on the quality of care they are receiving.
- Staff develop positive, nurturing relationships with children; children feel they are well cared for.
- A good range of activities helps children develop their personal interests and ensures that they have fun and enjoy themselves.
- Staff training opportunities are focused on the areas of practice where standards have previously been poor.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The learning and development work that has been undertaken to improve child protection and safeguarding practice needs to become fully embedded in practice.
- There needs to be effective implementation of the new procedures for admission and care planning.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/06/2017	Full	Inadequate
19/10/2016	Full	Good
20/07/2016	Full	Inadequate
30/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person must ensure that the home works in close partnership with all those who play a role in protecting and caring for the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 11, paragraph 2.3)
Specifically, ensure that therapists working for the organisation provide regular feedback on the progress that children are making in therapy.
- Staff should have the skills and confidence to communicate easily and understand the importance of listening to, involving and responding to the children they care for. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.10)
Specifically, ensure that arrangements are made for keeping children appropriately informed of the outcome of investigations into allegations of historic abuse.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the last full inspection in June 2017 the home was judged to be inadequate. The management and staff have worked collaboratively to improve standards across all aspects of practice. There has been an improvement in the overall quality of care being provided to the children.

The children speak positively about the staff who care for them. They seek reassurance and comfort from staff when feeling anxious or vulnerable. The current group of children is settled and demonstrates a sense of belonging. Staff were observed providing sensitive, nurturing care and the children's best interests are central to their practice.

There is a commitment to ensuring that the children are able to express their views on the day-to-day running of the home. Daily group meetings are managed skilfully, and this ensures that all children get the opportunity to have their say. Some children have been actively involved in developing their individual risk assessments. Advocacy services are promoted and there are arrangements in place for children to contact their advocate without recourse to staff.

Although the wishes and feelings of young people are clearly taken into account, the inspectors identified one case where no plans had been made for keeping a child informed of the outcome of a sensitive investigation.

All children either attend the organisation's school or education settings in the local

community. Their attendance is good and they make steady progress. The registered manager and staff communicate effectively with education professionals, and in some cases this has included the virtual headteacher for looked after children. This has ensured that children have had a positive experience when transitioning to a new school. Staff have enabled children to overcome their anxieties about changing schools through discussion and guidance given in key-work sessions.

Staff ensure that the health needs of children are met well. Detailed planning is undertaken when children require specific care to manage a medical condition. Children's mental health is given equal priority, and all children have access to therapeutic counselling provided by the organisation. In one case reviewed by the inspectors, the therapist is only reporting on the child's progress and engagement with therapy twice each year. Consequently, managers were unable to give a detailed account of how the child is benefiting from the therapeutic work.

There has been an improvement in the standard of care planning. Managers have begun to prioritise obtaining detailed background information on children from their placing authorities. This is enabling managers to focus more clearly on the work that needs to be undertaken with the child in order to achieve the placing authority's long term plan.

As children become more settled in the home, staff place a stronger emphasis on supporting them to develop their self-care and independence skills. This is done sensitively, and takes account of the child's age, ability and vulnerability. One child has made significant progress in relation to going out into the community for short periods without staff supervision.

The children are encouraged to develop their personal interests and hobbies, and their achievements are recognised and celebrated by staff. A range of stimulating activities are provided in the home and in the local community. Children speak enthusiastically about these, and often comment on how much fun they have. Children particularly enjoyed the seaside holidays they were taken on during the school summer break.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

The standard of safeguarding practice has improved since the full inspection in June 2017. All of the steps pertaining to the protection of children, specified in compliance notices issued in July 2017, have now been met. As a result children are more likely to be safeguarded effectively and protected from harm.

The processes and procedures that have been implemented to protect children from harm are still to become fully embedded in practice. At the time of this inspection, there was a settled group of children at the home, and there have been relatively few serious incidents in recent months. The effectiveness of the measures taken to improve safeguarding still need detailed scrutiny from leaders and managers to ensure that the improving standard of practice is maintained, and that children are consistently protected from harm.

Leaders and managers are developing processes to ensure that practice continues to improve. New initiatives include a safeguarding monitoring panel, which will review the overall standard of practice, and the introduction of a staff safeguarding competency framework. The framework will assess individual staff members' knowledge and skills in relation to the protection of children.

The staff spoken to during this inspection demonstrated an awareness of the particular vulnerabilities and risks associated with each child. Concerns for the welfare of children are being identified promptly and their individual risk assessments are being updated following significant events or changes of circumstances. This ensures that the strategies for protecting children are up to date and relevant.

There has been only one occasion since the last inspection when a child has gone missing from the home. Staff followed agreed procedures and the child was located quickly. Managers and staff know which children have the greatest potential to go missing from the home, and this is reflected in the children's risk profiles. The registered manager has been proactive in ensuring that arrangements for independent return home interviews to be undertaken, should they be needed, are agreed with placing authorities.

Children's behaviour management plans have been reviewed and updated and now contain specific strategies for managing challenging behaviour. They identify possible triggers and warning signs that could indicate that a child is becoming distressed. The associated strategies provide staff with guidance on how to respond effectively. Incidents of challenging behaviour are now seen as an opportunity to reflect and examine practice and set the agenda for key-working sessions.

Staff have developed a greater understanding of the group dynamics, and recognise the potential for conflict to arise. A restorative approach is taken to resolving conflict, with children often writing letters of apology to those adversely affected by their behaviour. There has been a proactive approach to minimising the potential for bullying in the home. This has included specialist anti-bullying professionals being invited to the home to give a presentation to the children. During this inspection, the children were observed to be tolerant towards one another, and often prepared to support and comfort one another during group meetings.

There has been one incident relating to internet safety, which compromised the well-being of a vulnerable child. This resulted from a failure to adequately supervise the child concerned and ensure that measures were in place to prevent inappropriate material being accessed. These shortfalls were addressed effectively by the management team, and the potential for a similar incident to occur has been minimised. The child has subsequently been given support and guidance relating to internet safety.

There are indications that a stronger safeguarding culture is beginning to emerge. For example, team meetings have provided an opportunity for staff to discuss safeguarding scenarios and contemplate how they would implement the home's child protection policy and procedures in such circumstances. A detailed home improvement plan is focused on addressing the poor practice identified at the inspection in June 2017. The home's

location risk assessment clearly identifies the potential risks to children in their local community.

There has been good managerial oversight of health and safety issues. This includes all aspects of fire safety. Consequently, the home now provides children with a safer environment, where potential hazards are rectified promptly.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home has a registered manager who is currently studying for the level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare. Five staff have left the home since June 2017, but this has not resulted in staff shortages or disruption for the children. Some staff from another of the organisation's homes, which closed earlier in the year, have transferred and this has resulted in consistent staffing levels being maintained.

There has been an overall improvement in the effectiveness of leaders and managers since the home was judged to be inadequate in June 2017. Seven compliance notices were issued in July 2017, to address breaches of regulation and widespread poor practice. A monitoring inspection was undertaken in August 2017 and although the majority of the steps specified in the compliance notices had been met, the timescale to fully meet the steps in three of the notices was extended. At this inspection it was judged that all compliance notices are now met. In addition, a requirement made at the monitoring inspection in relation to fire safety has also been met.

There has been a concerted effort to improve the quality of care monitoring systems. The registered manager's monitoring checklist has been amended to ensure greater scrutiny of practice. The organisation's service manager has played a significant role in overseeing the implementation of the home's monitoring systems. This has resulted in any shortfalls being quickly rectified. Leaders and managers have also introduced additional monitoring processes, particularly in relation to safeguarding, but these are in the early stages of development.

Action has been taken to ensure that the home's placement plans for children reflect the long-term goals of the child's placing authority. The plans now contain clear strategies for helping children to achieve permanency in their lives. Good partnership working with placing authorities has led to an overall improvement in monitoring the progress children make towards achieving their goals. There is an expectation that all placing authorities will engage in regular permanency planning meetings. This is indicative of a greater determination to ensure that children reach their potential and have improved outcomes.

There have been amendments made to the home's admission process. This includes a revised impact risk assessment format. This has the potential to ensure that a thorough analysis is undertaken of how the needs of all children will be affected when a new child comes to live at the home. There is also a revised agenda for a new admissions initial placement planning meeting.

No children have been admitted to the home since June 2017, and so these changes to

the admissions process have not yet been fully tested. The inspectors examined an impact risk assessment for a potential new admission. This was detailed, although no consideration had been given to whether staff had sufficient knowledge and skills to meet the needs of the child. The organisation's service manager said that this will now be addressed in future impact risk assessments.

Staff have undertaken a high level of training since the inspection in June 2017. The majority of the training has focused on improving staff's understanding of child protection policies, procedures and good safeguarding practice. The management team has undertaken advanced child protection training. During this inspection, staff were undertaking care planning training. Managers have ensured that the training being provided is relevant to the shortfalls identified by Ofsted in June 2017.

The staff spoken to during this inspection said that they have been well supported by the registered manager and deputy manager during a challenging period at the home. The staff feel able to discuss any concerns they may have, such as being asked to do overtime, with the manager. Staff receive good quality, practice-based supervision. All staff now have a professional development plan, which identifies their strengths and areas for development.

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 differences 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 and 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 whom 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: SC014235

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Lioncare Limited

Registered provider address: Lioncare Ltd, 186 Forest Road, Loughton, Essex IG10 1EG

Responsible individual: Matthew Vince

Registered manager: Sarah Jackson

Inspectors

Stephen Collett, social care inspector

Paul Taylor, social care inspector

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