

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	19/10/2016
Unique reference number	SC014235
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Lioncare Limited
Registered provider address	Lioncare Limited, 186 Forest Road, Loughton, Essex IG10 1EG

Responsible individual	Matthew Vince
Registered manager	Sarah Jackson
Inspector	Stephen Collett

Inspection date	19/10/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Inadequate
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

SC014235

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Children form trusting relationships with staff and begin to build positive attachments. They develop the confidence to begin talking about issues which are sensitive to them.
- Staff provide consistent care based on the individual needs of children. This ensures that children experience stability in their lives.
- The home's therapeutic model of care is embedded in practice. Children respond positively to this approach, and engage with daily routines associated with the model.
- Children have access to a range of specialist support which is arranged by the organisation. Advice and guidance provided by therapists are used to develop and improve care planning in the home.
- The particular needs and vulnerabilities of each child are known to staff. A proactive approach is taken to ensure that staff have a comprehensive knowledge of children's background circumstances.
- Behaviour management support plans are highly effective tools for identifying children's support needs, and clearly identify strategies that staff should employ to manage children's behaviour and reduce risk.
- Managers and staff are committed to hearing the views and opinions of children, and children are provided with a range of opportunities to express these.
- Individualised care ensures that children are able to pursue their interests and celebrate their identity. Overall, they enjoy positive relationships with their peers.
- Sensitive planning ensures that contact between children and their families becomes increasingly safe and a positive experience for all concerned.
- Some aspects of practice monitoring are very effective. This particularly relates to the use of physical restraint, which has led to improving practice in this area.
- Several shortfalls were identified in relation to the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

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
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met (c) 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 or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans.	02/12/2016
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.	02/12/2016
The registered person must take adequate precautions against the risk of fire. Specifically, ensure that the emergency evacuation plan is easily accessible, so that staff, children and visitors can familiarise themselves with the plan (Regulation 25 (1)(a)). The registered person must make arrangements for persons working at the home to receive suitable training in fire prevention (Regulation 25 (1)(c)). The registered person must ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that persons working at the home and, so far as reasonably practicable, children are aware of the procedure to follow in case of fire. Specifically, keep a written record of all those taking part in fire drills (Regulation 25 (1)(d)).	02/12/2016
The registered person must ensure that each individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform. Specifically, assess whether workers suffering from an illness are fit to perform their role in such a way as to promote the safety and well-being of the children (Regulation 32 (3)(c)).	02/12/2016

The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. Specifically, ensure that staff receive supervision within the timescale defined in the home's statement of purpose (Regulation 33 (4)(b)). The registered person must ensure that all employees have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year (Regulation 33 (4)(c)).	02/12/2016
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. Specifically, case records must contain a signed local authority placement plan which sets out the statutory provision under which the child is provided with accommodation (Regulation 36 (1)(a)).	02/12/2016

Full report

Information about this children's home

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

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/09/2016	Monitoring	N/A
20/07/2016	Full	Inadequate
30/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
10/09/2015	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
At the last full inspection in July 2016, the home was judged to be inadequate. A monitoring inspection took place in September 2016, and the time was extended for meeting some of the previous requirements. There has been an overall improvement in practice and in the quality of care being provided. Although some staff have left since the full inspection, children have experienced greater consistency in their lives. This is partly due to there being no new admissions of children, and staff have been able to focus on settling the current group. All children are beginning to establish trusting relationships with the staff. A social worker commented that a child 'has built a strong attachment to his care coordinator'. Staff were observed to be attentive and nurturing in their interactions with children, while maintaining consistent boundaries. This approach ensures that children develop a sense of security within a stable environment. They begin to talk more about their worries and concerns, and gradually begin to address the impact of their past negative experiences. A social worker said, 'His emotional well-being has improved. He is calmer and can self-regulate [his behaviour], and as a result he is less distressed.' Most children engage well with the individual counselling provided by the organisation. Feedback and advice provided by therapists are used to update strategies for caring for the children. This holistic approach further enhances the consistency that children experience. The therapeutic model of care underpinning the organisation's practice is embedded in the day-to-day care of children. The children's daily group meeting is one example of established routines that focus on how the children are feeling, and how their behaviour impacts on their peers and staff. Observation of a group meeting confirmed that staff have the skills to communicate effectively with children in this setting. Staff were vigilant in terms of the impact that group discussions were having on individual children, and offered sensitive support to those who were becoming anxious. Children are encouraged to make their views known, and to ask questions whenever they need an explanation. Children generally engage positively with these routines. They actively contribute to discussions, and help to identify solutions to problems. This means that conflicts are addressed and resolved quickly, leading to positive peer relationships. Children were observed supporting one another when it became clear that a peer was anxious or distressed. All children either attend the organisation's school, or schools in the local community. Staff communicate effectively with teachers daily, and this ensures that any emerging concerns are monitored and addressed in a timely manner. Children	

are praised for their achievements in school, and encouraged to do well. In one instance, despite having made her concerns known to the child's placing authority, the registered manager was not able to ensure alternative schools were given consideration for a particular child. This matter was not effectively escalated to more senior professionals within the placing authority.

Managers and staff are committed to ensuring that the views of children are heard. Children are able to make suggestions for how the home could be improved using a suggestions box, and there is a separate box for children who want to communicate worries or concerns. One child spoke with pride about how she has responsibility for monitoring the suggestions box. The registered manager has taken a proactive approach to ensuring that children can access an independent visitor. Steps have also been taken towards securing independent advocates for those children who want them, although this is not yet embedded in practice.

Children's health needs are met well. Staff have recently provided one child with sensitive support and care following an operation. Good monitoring of children's health ensures that any concerns are quickly identified. This has led to the registered manager making requests for prescribed medication to be reviewed, to establish whether any variations in dose would be beneficial. There is now an effective system in place for recording and monitoring the administration of medication used by children. Good health is also promoted by ensuring that the children receive a healthy, balanced diet, and giving them plenty of opportunities to take exercise. One child has recently expressed an interest in gymnastics, and staff have responded by identifying and communicating with a local gymnastics club.

A range of stimulating activities and trips out to local leisure facilities ensure that children have fun and can develop their interests. During the inspection, the children spoke enthusiastically about a trip to a local entertainment complex that was planned for the evening. This trip was well organised, and staff made sure that each child was clear about expectations and standards of behaviour before leaving the home.

Staff are focused on meeting the individual needs of children. They respect each child's individuality and differences, and the current staff team members act as good role models. Children's bedrooms are highly personalised to reflect their interests and personalities. They are encouraged to develop their own identities. Where it is appropriate to do so, this is often achieved by maintaining positive contact with family members. One social worker stated that it was 'a major achievement' that a child had been able to safely commence having overnight contact with his sibling, at his foster home. This achievement is partly attributable to the planning, support and supervision that staff provide, which ensures that family contact is a positive experience for all those concerned.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Managers and staff prioritise the need to keep children safe and protect them from harm. They are familiar with the particular vulnerabilities associated with each child, and use this knowledge to develop care plans and strategies which reduce risks. Effective partnership working with placing authority social workers ensures that these plans take account of those historic concerns which still have the capacity to impact negatively on the child's well-being. One social worker commented that staff have thoroughly examined a child's family chronology. As a result, the staff have a clear understanding of past trauma in the child's life, and how certain circumstances could result in the child demonstrating unsafe behaviours. Generally, the trusting relationships that children build with staff are a strong protective factor. This is evident in how children speak to staff about their worries and concerns. In recent months, concerns about the ability of some staff to build such supportive, trusting relationships emerged. These matters have now been dealt with. Records of key work sessions (known as care coordinator sessions) demonstrate that the current staff team members have the skills to communicate effectively with children, and support them to overcome their anxieties. Children's individual risk assessments have improved in recent months. These are now completed in a timely manner, and reflect the issues from which children are most at risk. Some risk assessments lack detailed strategies for reducing risk. However, this is compensated for by the introduction of new behaviour management support plans. These are now a particular strength of the home. They provide staff with clear guidance on how to respond to a child demonstrating unsafe or concerning behaviours. In addition, these plans define the triggers and warning signs that might alert a member of staff to a child becoming anxious or distressed, and therefore vulnerable. Behaviour management strategies stem from the home's therapeutic model of care, which is embedded in day-to-day practice. Children are encouraged to recognise and reflect on how their behaviour impacts on the other children, and on the staff caring for them. Consistent boundaries are maintained and, over time, children respond positively to these. Since the full inspection in July 2016, the registered manager has closely monitored the use of physical restraint and has identified occasions when de-escalation techniques could have been more effective. She has addressed these issues in staff supervisions and team meetings. There has been a significant improvement in how incidents of physical restraint are recorded. This enables effective analysis of incidents, and provides indicators of where practice can be further improved. In recent weeks, there has been a reduction in the number of physical restraints used to manage challenging behaviour.	

Children are closely supervised by staff, and there have been no occasions since the last full inspection when children have gone missing. There are clear, written strategies for staff to follow should any child go missing. Consideration has also been given to who would undertake independent return home interviews should this become an issue in the future.

Staff understand the risks that children and young people could face when accessing the internet or social media sites. One young person alerted staff to the fact that he was being bullied via the internet. This demonstrates that children and young people feel empowered to take action to stop bullying. Effective action was taken by staff when this issue came to light. All internet access is supervised by staff and this is appropriate to the ages of the current children.

Since the full inspection in July 2016, significant improvements have been made to the physical condition of the home. However, some health and safety hazards, referred to in the leadership and management section of this report, have not been identified through quality of care monitoring systems. In particular, shortfalls in the standard of fire safety practice had not been recognised. The home's fire evacuation plan is not prominently displayed, the names of staff and children taking part in fire drills are not recorded and some staff have not completed mandatory fire safety training.

Staff recruitment documents were not reviewed at this inspection, as they were last reviewed at the monitoring inspection undertaken on 14 September 2016. This established that improvements have been made, particularly in relation to completing checks on potential employees before they commence working directly with children.

Any child protection concerns are reported to the relevant agencies in a timely manner, and records are kept of all subsequent follow up actions. Children who make disclosures of abuse receive sensitive, child-focused support, and steps are taken to ensure that they are kept safe. Managers and staff now consult effectively with other child protection professionals. The designated person in the local authority commented that managers had addressed poor practice in accordance with the home's action plan, and that they (managers) now 'seek advice straight away'.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The registered manager is an experienced practitioner. She holds the level 4 diploma in leadership and management for health and social care, and is currently studying for the level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare. She is making steady progress with her studies, but acknowledges that her priority in recent months has been to address the poor standards of practice identified in the July 2016 inspection. She is supported in her role by a skilled and	

knowledgeable deputy manager.

In recent months, there has been inconsistent staffing at the home. Since the full inspection in July 2016, three members of staff have left the home, and there have been three new starters. Staff retention has been problematic, but the staff team is currently stable. The majority of staff members are suitably qualified for their role. Recruitment is an ongoing process across the organisation. At the time of this inspection, there were insufficient numbers of permanent staff for the home to be operating with a full complement of seven children. As there were only four children in placement, the existing staff group members were sufficient. Senior managers do not intend to admit new children until they have a full staff team in place.

A new system for monitoring the quality of care has been introduced. The registered manager now takes a more active role in collating and analysing information gathered for quality of care reports. Her monitoring of practice relating to the physical restraint of children has been effective, and has identified areas for improvement. However, day-to-day monitoring of standards in the home is not yet consistently good. A number of health and safety hazards were identified. These included restrictors not being fitted to the windows in children's bedrooms, an inappropriate light fitting above a shower cubicle, door safety mechanisms incorrectly adjusted and freezer temperatures not being monitored and recorded. There were also shortfalls in the implementation of fire safety procedures. Some of these concerns were rectified during the inspection.

Managers are committed to working in partnership with other agencies, and work hard to forge positive working relationships with them. Although they are prepared to challenge professionals that they perceive not to be working in the best interests of children, this has not consistently produced positive outcomes. In one case, no consultation had taken place with senior managers from a placing authority, or the independent reviewing officer for a child, despite there being significant concerns about a professional's lack of engagement. The registered manager expressed the view that the child was disadvantaged as a result of this situation.

Although staff report that they feel well supported by managers, not all processes for ensuring professional development are fully utilised. For example, not all staff receive individual supervision regularly, as described in the home's statement of purpose. One new member of staff did not receive formal supervision in the first two and a half months of employment. Similarly, annual appraisals of staff performance are not always completed in a timely manner. One member of staff, who has worked at the home for approximately eighteen months, was still waiting for his first annual appraisal to take place.

Staff have the confidence to discuss their personal circumstances with managers, where these have the potential to impact negatively on their performance. This includes physical and mental health issues. This has resulted in staff receiving advice and guidance on how they may overcome difficulties that they are experiencing. However, in one case, insufficient monitoring meant that the registered manager was unaware if the advice had been followed. No assessment

was undertaken to establish whether the staff member's personal circumstances were having a detrimental impact on the care provided to children, despite emerging concerns about the individual's practice. Leaders and managers did not risk assess whether the children were at risk as a result of this situation. Ultimately, one child was mistreated and others put at risk of harm.

The organisation provides a comprehensive range of training courses. These enable staff to develop the knowledge and skills required to practice in accordance with the home's therapeutic model of care. One member of staff, spoken to during the inspection, was able to reflect on his learning from the level 3 diploma in therapeutic childcare. He described an increased understanding of how children's negative experiences can influence their behaviours, and how they can transfer feelings of anger and frustration onto those caring for them today. Training also has a focus on keeping children safe. A review of the effectiveness of training has resulted in updated training relating to child sexual exploitation and internet safety being delivered from October 2016. Management monitoring of training completed by staff has failed to identify that not all staff have undertaken fire safety training.

Children's case records are generally well maintained. They clearly record the individual needs of children, and the plans for ensuring that these are met. Records give an insight into the progress that children make towards meeting their goals and targets. At the time of this inspection, no case files contained signed local authority placement plans. Therefore, the home had no signed record of the statutory provision under which accommodation is being provided for any of the children residing in the home. During the inspection, managers began taking action to rectify this shortfall.

Overall, leaders and managers have taken action to improve standards of care and practice since the last full inspection in July 2016. Requirements made at the July inspection, and at the follow up monitoring inspection in September 2016, have been met. One member of staff commented that expectations and responsibilities are now clearer, and this helps them to do their jobs well. The registered manager acknowledges that raising standards is work in progress, and there are still improvements to be made. Her assessment of the current situation is indicative of a willingness to address the shortfalls identified, and ensure that effective leadership and management leads to continuous improvement.

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 that 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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