

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC014848
Inspector	Mark Fitzgerald
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Cornerways Children's Services Limited
Registered person address	Alpha A, Smallmead House Smallmead Horley Surrey RH6 9LW
Responsible individual	Sara Ann Milner
Registered manager	Andrew Wayne Fisher
Date of last inspection	06/11/2014

Inspection date	03/03/2015
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Previous inspection	good
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **declined in effectiveness**.

The progress and experience of most young people in the home since the last inspection has not been positive. The registered manager has been in post for six months. The leadership provided by the management team is tentative and not wholly effective. The one statutory requirement arising from the previous inspection in November 2014 has not been met. Despite the provision of support from the staff team, young people are not sufficiently protected. Risk management recording is not complete. Poor placement matching undermines stability. Partnership working is good.

The home provides a homely, safe environment for children and young people. The building is a large detached house in a semi-rural location. It is well decorated in a modern contemporary style, well maintained and spacious. Large wooded gardens provide young people with the space for a number of different activities.

The recommendation from the previous inspection dealing with decoration has been acted on. The home provides a comfortable homely environment, where children's bedrooms are personalised according to their interests and preferences.

The home is not occupied to full capacity. At the time of inspection, five of the six places available are filled. There has been one departure from the children's home since the last inspection. The placement was not successful and caused disruption for other residents.

One new resident has recently arrived since the last inspection and is adapting to the new care and education environments and the people in them. This admission had been planned. Preparation included a visit from the manager as well as a brief visit to the home to familiarise the young person.

Two young people were generally positive about the care they receive. When asked to list their favourite things about the home, they said 'the staff and the other residents', the 'clothes money' and the 'homely' feel to the building. Two different young people have made a request that they want more staff, 'on the floor' with them. In the latest example a young person said she would like, 'staff to sit and talk to us more'.

Care planning is inconsistent. One care plan had not been updated for over a year. A recommendation from the previous inspection clearly stated the need to ensure that records are clear and up to date. This has now been elevated to a requirement. Transition planning is not timely. In one case, the expectations for a successful move to independence are unrealistic due to the lack of suitable preparation.

The quality of care is improving as the home regains its former stability. Young people's adherence to basic rules and routines is increasing as they start to re-invest in the home. The significant vulnerabilities of the residents present ongoing challenges to the staff group.

In relation to a recommendation at the previous inspection, there is no longer any evidence that restrictions made by staff to manage behaviour for one child imposes similar restrictions on other children.

Education is provided by the owners as part of an integrated package of residential and therapeutic care. This 'in-house' provision is a small independent registered school for children and young people aged 11-18. It specialises in supporting young people with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, Special Educational Needs, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Oppositional Defiance Disorder, attachment disorders, Autistic Spectrum Disorders and Asperger's. The provision also caters for young people with mental health issues or requiring recovery from trauma.

Most young people have benefited from their time at the school and until Christmas 2014, attendance levels were good. In January 2015, attendance levels for some young people were inconsistent but this is now improving.

Most of the young people's mental and emotional health needs are being addressed. The staff team works with specialist health professionals to ensure young people gain access the mental health services they require. Young people's physical health needs require greater support. Previous attempts by staff to help young people to stop smoking have been ineffective.

The staff team support young people's contact with their families where it is possible to do so. These arrangements can involve staff and young people travelling long distances. Such contact helps young people to feel connected to their families despite being geographically far apart.

The weekly activity planner was not updated in the absence of the registered

manager on leave, despite this aspect of care being the subject of a recommendation at the previous inspection. One staff member commented that the young people can be 'difficult to motivate'. Boredom is identified as a contributory factor to episodes of missing from home in a risk assessment relating to two of the residents. In this way, lack of a structured activity can impact adversely on the safety of young people.

A stable staff team provides consistency of care for the residents. This minimises the need to call on staff that are external to the home. The effect on young people is that they are cared for by adults they are familiar with, and who are familiar with them.

Records show only three sanctions applied by staff in the last two months. Records of consequences do not include any instances of positive rewards earned.

Although the most recent placement demonstrates good pre-placement preparation, placement matching is not well-considered. The disruption to staff and young people as a consequence of a recent placement reflects this. The placement was made because at the time, the home was regarded as settled. Unfortunately that stability ended when vulnerable residents started to go missing as a group.

Consultation meetings between staff and young people are irregular, poorly attended by young people and are unstructured. The recording of these meetings were still in rough note form and were not available to staff or young people as a record. Similarly, the manager's response to any requests made within these meetings is not recorded.

Staff meetings are held on a fortnightly basis. All permanent staff are either qualified to the required level or are studying to become qualified. Members of care staff expressed their view that there could be scope for greater integration between the care and therapeutic branches of support within the home.

The manager is aware of the need to devote some time to building the staff team back up after the recent period of disruption. He intends to support the staff team to learn to adapt better to change. He described the home as 'in a state of recovery'. Interviews have been held for two vacant posts. Suitable candidates are available and are undergoing employment checks.

The latest reports by an independent visitor to the home are in place, but the quarterly review of the quality of care has not been sent to Ofsted and is overdue. The home's development plan is in the process of being updated. It has not been revised since a previous manager completed it in 2013.

The only complaint since the last inspection was investigated by the registered manager, judged to be upheld and the outcome was reported back to the complainant, in accordance with the home's complaints policy.

There have not been any physical interventions since the last inspection, but there has been an increase in the number of missing from home episodes. Although these episodes were not prevented, the post-incident follow up was thorough. Strategic planning with partner agencies resulted in a revised plan and risk assessments for residents. The effect of this work means that young people are protected by a joined-up multi-agency response to episodes of missing. Young people say that bullying does not happen in the home. Self-harm continues to have a negative impact on the well-being of young people.

The requirement from the previous inspection, that all risk management strategies are written down and fully implemented in practice, is not met. Although placement plans do contain specific risk management sections, they do not make reference to the risks associated with the use of new technologies and social media.

Partnership working with families is effective. The provision works hard to ensure that contact with families is regular and ongoing. Relationships with social workers are good. Recent safeguarding work with police and local authority representatives has been successful.

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care for up to six young females who experience emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is part of a private company which has an independent fostering agency, a total of three residential homes and an independent school.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/11/2014	Full	good
29/01/2014	Interim	good progress
24/07/2013	Full	good
06/02/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in the children's home an up-to-date record in permanent form which includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 (Regulation 28(a)(b))	07/05/2015
20 (2001)	promote and protect the physical, emotional and mental health of the children accommodated in the children's home (Regulation 20(1))	07/05/2015
18 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in the home are provided with appropriate leisure facilities and activities (Regulation 18 (b))	07/05/2015
34 (2001)	supply to HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted by him for the purposes of regulation 34 paragraph 1, and make a copy of the report	07/05/2015

	available on request to placing authorities where the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home (Regulation 34(2))	
11 (2001)	promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding of children accommodated in the children's home; in particular ensure all risk management strategies are written down and fully implemented in practice. (Regulation 11 (1)(a))	07/05/2015

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.