

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	5 August 2015
Unique reference number	SC020594
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's Home
Registered person	Keys Education Limited
Registered person address	Hurstwood Court, Laganwood House New Hall Hey Road Rossendale Lancashire BB4 6HR

Responsible individual	Emma Beech
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspectors	Michelle Spruce Christy Wannop

Inspection date	5 & 6 August 2015
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
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

SC020594

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- Leadership has not embedded the improvements made after the inadequate judgment last year. There are too many repeated shortfalls in areas of weakness previously identified by Ofsted.
- Systems for safe administration of medication are still not good enough, despite updates to policy. Practice is inconsistent. The service struggles to obtain essential information from placing authorities. This delays effective care planning. The register of all children continues to lack essential information.
- Young people have shared bedrooms with staff when away from the house. Staff do not keep managers informed when offsite plans change. Risk assessments for this are not adequate.
- There are not enough bedrooms for the number of children who, at capacity, could stay at the main house. The registered person is seeking a reduction in numbers.
- The house is dirty and not well maintained. Risk management systems have not taken account of clear hazards to health and safety. Security monitoring systems are used without proper consent. Staff do not get the supervision and appraisal they need.
- Young people and some staff, do not understand or implement some of the more rigid house rules consistently.

The children's home strengths

- The service provides a fabulous opportunity for active, exhilarating outward bound experiences. Young people learn skills while out in the wilds: this provides an excellent grounding in independence for the next stage of their lives. Placing authorities are very satisfied.
- There is good practice in challenging local authorities to find the right onward placement in good time. An engaged and interested staff team are committed to fulfilling care for young people, not just containment.
- Young people experience good relationships, conversations, and learn the benefit of shared responsibility in their time with the staff. They understand that they have to work hard and they see the benefits when they do. There is excellent support for difference and diversity.

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
12 The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with respect to assessment of risk and the quality of the on, and offsite, accommodation, (2)(a) the registered person must ensure that staff— (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; (c) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded; (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.	30/09/2015
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; and so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance. (Regulation 24(a)(b)(c))	30/09/2015
The registered person must maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; in this case, a record in the form of a register showing the child's address immediately before being accommodated in the home.(Regulation 37(2) (a) Schedule 4(1) (c))	30/09/2015
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23(1))	30/09/2015
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which include the information and documents listed in	30/09/2015

Schedule 3 in relation to each child. Specifically: a copy of any plan for the care of the child prepared by the child's placing authority, and of the placement plan; the date and result of any review of the placing authority's plan for the care of the child, or of the child's placement plan. (Regulation 36 (1), Sch 3 (18) (19))	
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33(4 (c)(d)))	30/09/2015

Recommendations

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

Ensure the reasons for reaching any decision are carefully explained to and understood by the child or children concerned. In particular, review with young people and make clear the 'house rules,' the Children's Guide and house information. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, Page 22, paragraph 4.9)

Ensure children have separate bedrooms and should not share bedrooms with an adult. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 16, paragraph 3.19)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a large national, private company. It offers care and accommodation for 10 young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It offers crisis placements for up to twelve weeks. A feature of the service is a three tier programme of offsite adventure activities. When away overnight during these activities, young people sleep in tents, bunk houses, or bothies.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/07/2014	CH - Full	Good
13/05/2014	CH – Full	Inadequate
24/10/2013	CH-interim	Satisfactory progress
13/06/2013	CH-Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	requires improvement
Despite the strengths and opportunities for young people to experience active, exhilarating outward bound adventures, the service requires improvement. Too many recurring inconsistencies and regulatory shortfalls have the potential to impact on young people's welfare and safety. The registered person struggles to obtain local authority assessment and planning documents for the care of the young person at the point of admission. Records of statutory reviews are not in place. Essential information is sometimes missing, for example, crucial health information. This has been a chronic shortfall at previous inspections. The lack of information impacts of the ability of staff to deliver individualised care or to respond quickly after a care review to any fresh actions. Arrangements for administration of medication are very weak. Policy, procedure, and practice do not take account of the very particular type of outward bound service in administration, recording and storing medication. Management audits have not identified discrepancies. Staff do not understand how to operate safe administration, stock control or storage. The care delivered is a set programme: rules are rigid and young people sometimes do not understand these. They ask logical questions about the set up and do not feel they get a good answer from staff. For example, staff continue to impose school-hour restrictions on use of the telephone, even though it is holiday time and there are no formal reasons why young people should not talk to their parents. There are lots of different documents about rules, but not a consistent, clear guide for young people. Young people have a continual turnover, so relationships with each other are short lived. The registered person makes good efforts to gain their views and staff record these on every shift report. Young people have made sensible suggestions about funding, activities, and resourcing and that they need a counsellor or therapist on site. Young people make variable progress. Some, who do not want to engage, have actively resisted the programme and their placements have not been successful. Some continue with running away and criminal activity, assault staff and put	

themselves at risk. Staff implement their training and protocols with police and local safeguarding agencies to mobilise support and keep young people safe from exploitation.

Young people who do engage, develop self-confidence and expand their horizons. They have a very positive experience and for some, the experience is powerfully positive. Young people understand that they have to work hard and they see the benefits when they do. They get to try paddle boarding, mountain climbing, rafting and canoeing, as well as education at their pace. One said: 'At first I hated it; now that I've got on with the programme- I like it.'

Relationships between staff and young people are very positive, and the close supervision and high staffing levels enable young people to build equal, trusting bonds in a short period. Staff and young people form connections over activities and hobbies. They talk, share responsibility for cooking and camping chores. They have access to advocacy and their views matter. The staff respect individuality and support young people's difference and diversity. A placing social worker commented she was, 'absolutely blown away' by the impact of staff's creativity and positivity one young person. She described how they had 'struggled and been in chaos in all placements,' but the young person was now able to reflect on past experiences. Even those young people who say the outdoor experience is not the right choice for them, say they trust their key worker: 'he sorts it out.'

Educational support is good. An active vocational prospectus and input from the organisation's teaching staff, deliver opportunities to achieve to young people who may not have experienced success previously. When offsite, young people learn through activities and when onsite, they use the classroom in the service's educational building. They develop excellent independence skills for the next stage of their lives, learning how to look after their equipment and outward bound 'kit' and take responsibility for preparation, and completing any expedition or activity.

Staff demonstrate, and young people share, healthy lifestyles. The quality of young people's day-to-day experience is good. They have daily opportunities to take part in exhilarating, safe activities. Some young people have been transformed through their experiences. The service offers an isolated rural experience; distance from city homes is part of the raison d'être of the service. Young people sometimes struggle with this separation from previous locations and routines and habits, but staff help them to visit and keep in touch where this is part of their agreed plan.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
Risk assessments, for life at the home and when sleeping offsite on outward bound activities are not in line with the organisation's own procedures and are not safe. Young people have shared offsite bunk house sleeping accommodation with staff, when plans have changed. Staff did not consult with managers about these arrangements, and so the registered person was completely unaware of this. Health and safety systems at the home are not good enough. The registered person has not planned to remove risk for young people who may attempt self-harm or suicide, for example, ligature points or bathroom doors that staff cannot open in an emergency. Weekly monitoring has not picked up obvious shortfalls. There are hazards in the home's drainage systems, some window handles are missing, or windows cannot safely open, and extractor fans are unreliable. There is a build-up of damp and mould in some bathroom and toilet areas. Shower rails are rusty, floors are stained. Contract cleaners appear not to have cleaned some rooms for some time, with significant cobwebs and dust. Staff sleeping rooms smell musty. Graffiti is not adequately erased so young people move into rooms defaced by previous occupants. The registered person does not make sure that young people are aware, or part, of the decision to use bedroom door alarms. They are a routine part of the onsite security systems and take no account of individual needs. Young people say they feel safe. For some this is a major achievement. They become safe for the first time in long periods and halt dangerous behaviour. Staff help young people value themselves without the need, during the placement, to seek affirmation from unwise acquaintances. One young person talked about how the continuous staff presence, 'kept me out of trouble.' Opportunities in daily key working sessions made another think about how to resist previous lifestyles, saying it was, 'like criminal rehab.' Placing authorities value this: many young people have come from court or from risky situations, gang related behaviour, threats, drugs, going missing and child sexual exploitation. One completely broke habitual drug taking and regained an enthusiasm for learning. One described the relief from the enforced separation from social media, saying she felt, 'very safe - very secure.' Staff apply their positive relationships and use conversation and constructive key working sessions as a basis to changing challenging behaviour. This works for many. Young people work through the programme, earning privileges and valuing their progress as a reward in itself, pleased to be moving up the levels. Staff use de-escalation techniques, with restraint a last resort if this approach does not work and young people are at risk. Staff often go above and beyond the agreed protocols to search for young people who do go missing. Not all young people can meet the challenge to change and for some the pull of going missing, violent or	

criminal behaviour, or just previous coping and avoidance mechanisms, are too strong. In these cases, the registered person advocates with placing authorities for the best possible ending and alternative placement.

Recruitment systems ensure that only safe adults are employed to work with young people. The safety of staff and young people while on challenging activities are covered by the registered person's license to operate as an outdoor activity centre. The registered person liaises well with the local safeguarding team when there are any allegations or concerns, and notifies Ofsted and placing authorities of any significant issues in young people's lives.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
There is change in the home's management structure. The registered manager resigned in early August. She has been promoted within the organisation, but still has input at the home. A new manager, the previous deputy, has been appointed, but has not yet applied to register with Ofsted. The registered person's systems of quality assurance and review are not effective. Despite having achieved a good rating at the last Ofsted inspection, the registered person has not been able to maintain that quality. Shortfalls identified now are common to those raised by Ofsted over 12 months ago. The inability to secure progress is a key leadership issue. The children's register still does not contain the legally required minimum information about last known address. Children's files are still missing key local authority care planning information. Supervision and appraisal for permanent and agency staff is not good enough. Despite a mutually supportive working environment for staff, managers do not provide a formal private session, so staff do not benefit from clear lines of professional accountability. The children's home has the feel of a youth hostel. It is an anomaly that the service is registered for ten young people, but they only have bedrooms for eight. The responsible individual plans to lower the number. However, male and female staff also have to share makeshift, spartan bedrooms at the home, as it is often impractical for them to return home at the end of a day shift. Staff say they do not mind. Despite the shortfalls, there are strengths in the service. Managers and key workers are good at holding placing authorities to account for finding the right follow on placement in good time. They are clear that they do not want to just	

contain young people. Good relationships with local police have resulted in proactive visits to build relationships and to support young people's complaints.

Staffing levels are good. There are at least two staff to each young person when out and about. The registered person has ensured continuity for young people by using the same agency staff to fill gaps in the rota. Staff enjoy coming to work and say that training is good. They are selected for their skills in active adventure and they have a good mix of age, gender, experience and background, including ethnicity. Young people say they are one of the best things: 'they tell you- help you talk to your social worker,' and 'staff best thing- 'get along.'

Placing authorities are pleased with the service. One said, 'the placement is excellent, gained a whole different view on life, totally appreciate the staff keep her safe'.

The service makes good beginnings for young people: staff go and collect them when they can, to start the placement on the right note. Relationships, when young people engage, are clearly mutually enjoyable. Farewells, when young people move on, are often tearful. One said: 'feel like I'm at home.' This experience really works for young people who engage: they feel secure and happy in the most unusual of surroundings.

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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