

SC021677

Registered provider: The Partnership of Care Today Children's Services

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The children's home is run by a partnership. It offers care and accommodation for up to four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The registered manager is suitably qualified and experienced.

Inspection dates: 22 to 23 October 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 19 September 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/09/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/06/2018	Full	Good
05/02/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
13/06/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure– that staff– help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 8(2)(a)(i)) In particular, the registered manager should ensure that education plans are updated and requested from the placing authority.	31/01/2020
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if– a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; or an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(4)(a)(b))	31/01/2020
The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. (Regulation 44(5)) This is with reference to the home's manager ensuring that the recommendations made by the visitor are acted upon.	31/01/2020

Recommendations

- Homes must meet children's basic day to day needs and provide physical necessities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

This is with specific reference to young people and staff having shared supplies of crockery and cutlery.

- Staff skills for safeguarding should include being able to identify signs that children may be at risk, and support children in strategies to manage and reduce any risks. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.10)

This is with specific reference to online safety procedures.

- Any sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the community. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person is responsible for ensuring that all staff consistently follow the home's policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home's care. Everyone working at the home must understand their roles and responsibilities and what they are authorised to decide on their own initiative. There should be clear lines of accountability. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)

This is with specific reference to the recording and monitoring of the use of restraint in the home.

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion, and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people are happy and feel safe in the home. Young people say that staff will listen to them if they need advice or help. One young person said: 'The staff are really supportive. If you ever need a one-to-one, they drop everything and talk to us. If you need help with something, they really help.'

Staff take the time to understand the young people and their individual needs. One young person has complex health issues. Staff show a good level of understanding of and sensitivity to this young person's medical needs. Staff also help the young person to manage his personal care and encourage him to attend all medical appointments.

The home has recently undergone full redecoration. Young people have contributed to the choice of decor and colour in both their own rooms and throughout the home. This helps young people to have a sense of ownership and feeling of belonging in the home. The culture in the home is for young people and staff to have separate utensils and crockery. This does not create a communal or homely environment, and it may be perceived as institutional in practice.

Young people access their wider community, and some young people play regular football matches in the local park. Consequently, young people can make appropriate friendships in the local community. Young people also partake in several activities, such as the cinema and bowling. These opportunities help young people to increase their social and emotional experiences and help them to grow in confidence when out in the community.

All young people are encouraged to have a voice in the home. Young people are offered the opportunity to chair their house meetings. This encourages young people to share their views and plan weekly activities. All young people are offered an advocate and they know how to make a complaint.

The home has been proactive and encouraged flexible contact arrangements between young people and their families. One young person now has weekend overnight stays with his mum, and another young person hopes to have Christmas at home with family.

All young people have access to the local primary healthcare service and attend all their routine appointments. Some young people access mental health services for additional emotional support.

All young people are matched to educational placements, however not all young people have up-to-date education plans on file. One young person has 100 per cent school attendance and really enjoys going to school. Some young people have not attended education for some time, and struggle in a classroom environment. The home has worked with an education outreach team attached to this young person's school. This arrangement provides an alternative curriculum tailored to his needs. Furthermore, he

plans to take some exams in summer next year. This is a tremendous achievement for this young person, who previously did not attend school. It is important that young people visit areas of interest to enhance their education, such as museums, when not in school full time.

Efforts are made to ensure that young people have smooth transitions when they leave the home. Unfortunately, the last two placements ended abruptly. The long-term plan was for both young people to return home to their respective families. While the home contributed to these plans, before the placement had concluded one young person refused to return to the home.

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

Staff have good working relationships with young people's parents through effective relationship-building. This creates trust between the home, the young person and the family. Staff have helped one young person to spend overnight contact with his mum and nan. Consequently, the young person has felt listened to and, subsequently, he has not only enjoyed spending quality time with his family but, equally, his missing-from-care episodes have significantly reduced. Staff have completed unannounced visits in the evening to ensure that he is safe and well.

Young people have access to their games consoles in their bedrooms. Staff say that they monitor the type of games that young people can access. However, a more detailed understanding of safer-internet use is recommended to ensure that staff are fully aware of safeguarding measures.

Each young person has a risk assessment in place. The documents lack some detail and do not routinely identify the triggers or explain how to manage the presenting behaviour. Risk assessments are not routinely signed or dated by staff. This is important to ensure that all staff have seen the risk assessment and are aware of the action required, should an incident occur.

All young people have key-work sessions. One young person has been helped to understand his daily routines through pictorial images. This simple but effective tool has helped this young person to have a good understanding of his daily structure, as daily routine is important to him. Key-work sessions do vary in quality. Some lack detailed recording and evaluation or the action points to help young people to progress. For another young person, there was a lack of detail when he had returned home after an episode of being missing. Key-work sessions are reactive rather than preventative. Young people have access to their files and, on occasion, there is negative language in records, which are then accessed by young people.

There have been 62 sanctions for five young people since the last inspection. The sanctions focus on taking away pocket money or restricting the use of games consoles. This could be viewed as punitive in nature, and the young people do not benefit from any alternative restorative approach to addressing their behaviour.

Staff encourage young people to practise and follow their religious and cultural beliefs.

For this to be meaningful, it is important that young people have a say in what is important to them and how they identify.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is suitably qualified and has been the manager of the home for some years. The registered manager has a small fostering caseload within the company. At times, the manager is required to attend meetings due to the additional duties of this fostering role. The day-to-day running of the home and responsibility are left to an efficient deputy manager. The deputy manager is familiar with the systems and records of the home, and she has been responsible for ensuring that files and documents are kept in order.

The registered manager has identified the strengths and weaknesses of the home and areas that he wishes to improve to ensure that there is consistency of practice within his staff team. A lack of management oversight has resulted in issues emerging in the quality of staff recording in the home. For example, the records of restraint show discrepancies in the restraint procedure, yet the senior signatory has not picked up these discrepancies or addressed them with the staff involved.

Staff report being happy at work, and they enjoy coming to work. Staff show a high level of commitment and some staff have been in the home for some years. This results in a stable and settled team of staff who understand the needs of the children. Staff receive a range of training through the organisation. Not all staff have completed up-to-date online safety training tailored to the needs of the young people.

Staff have good relationships with professionals and placing authorities. Good working partnerships ensure that children receive all-round support in all areas of their development. Staff take day-to-day responsibility for young people and understand the needs of the group.

The registered manager must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if a young person is missing and the police have been notified. This is particularly relevant if the young person is known to be involved in, or is known to be at risk of, child sexual exploitation.

An independent visitor provides monitoring and a review of the quality of the care that young people receive. The independent visitor completes a monthly report, and this assists the manager to make improvements within the home. It is also an opportunity for the manager to evaluate his practice in the home. The registered manager is required to complete the recommendations from the report within an agreed timescale. There have been some gaps in the manager's completion of the visitor's recommended actions.

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 difference 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: SC021677

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: The Partnership of Care Today Children's Services

Registered provider address: Lansdowne House, 85 Buxton Road, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 6LR

Registered manager: Anthony Garmory

Inspector

Kamal Bhamra, social care inspector

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