

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	29/11/2016 – 30/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC021677
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered organisation	The Partnership of Care Today services.
Registered person address	Lansdowne House, 85 Buxton Road, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 6LR
Responsible individual	Vivienne Snape
Registered manager	Mr Tony Garmory
Inspectors	Maria McGranaghan and Nicola Thomas

Inspection date	29/11/2016 – 30/11/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
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

SC021677

Summary of findings

This children's home's provision requires improvement because:

- Young people do not benefit from age-appropriate care or support. Young people are expected to travel independently resulting in some young people as young as 12 using public transport at 9.00pm in the evening.
- While care plans are regularly updated, there is little evidence of how the home works with young people to achieve their placement goals.
- Basic healthcare plans do not address some young people's health concerns.
- Behaviour management is inconsistent. Behaviour management records fail to provide individual strategies for managing disruptive behaviours.
- There are frequent episodes of disruptive and aggressive behaviour, resulting in staff being assaulted and damage to the home.
- There is a delay in staff accessing appropriate education for young people.
- When schools are identified, young people are inconsistent in their attendance.
- Young people do not benefit from a partnership approach to their care. Few external agencies are involved in the care planning and management of young people.
- Risk assessments do not detail how the home is to manage risk or the steps to be taken to reduce risk. Young people with a history of being missing or absent from home do not benefit from individual missing from home plans or strategies.
- The registered manager does not provide the scrutiny required in the monitoring and review of the care provided in the home. Areas for development are not routinely identified.
- Internal and external monitoring of the home's practice takes place. However, records do not identify how the home addresses the goals and targets of plans or how they may need to be adjusted to meet the changing age and needs of young people.
- Although impact assessments are completed for new admissions to the home, strategies are not put in place to manage concerns at the point of admission.

The children's home's strengths

- Staff receive regular supervision.
- Staff receive regular training opportunities.
- The home is maintained to a reasonable standard.
- There is a full-time, consistent staff team.
- Young people are consulted on some matters regarding the running of the home.

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
The registered person must seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs, in particular early intervention for substance misuse and criminal or antisocial behaviour. (Regulation 5 (b))	14/02/2017
Ensure that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, helping children of compulsory school age who are not attending school to return as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1)(2)(viii))	14/03/2017
Ensure that staff help each child to develop the child's interests and hobbies, and make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community. (Regulation 9 (2)(i)(iii))	14/02/2017
Ensure that the health and well-being needs of young people are met. Young people receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being and are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c))	14/02/2017
Ensure that staff meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, help each child to develop socially aware behaviour and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively. (Regulation 11 (2)(i)(ii)(iv))	14/02/2017
Ensure that staff 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 that child. (Regulation 12 (2)(a)(i))	14/02/2017
Ensure that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (2)(b))	14/02/2017
Ensure that managers understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development	14/02/2017

of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (2)(f))	
Ensure that the registered person uses monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (2)(h))	14/02/2017
Ensure that the registered person notifies without delay incidents which relate to a young person which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	14/02/2017

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities, both inside and outside of the home and are encouraged to participate in those activities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5)
- Ensure that staff provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming, supportive and in particular offers age-appropriate boundaries and resources. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)
- Ensure that when there is a possibility that a child will run away or go missing/absent from a children's home placement, their placement plan should include a strategy to minimise this risk. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.24)
- Ensure that the behaviour management strategy is understood and applied at all times by staff, and must be kept under review and revised where appropriate. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.34)
- Ensure that young people are actively encouraged to read their records and to add further information to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.6)
- Ensure that the registered person is responsible for leading a team which provides a high quality of care for all children living in the children's home. They must lead and manage the home in a way that delivers the ethos, outcomes and approach as set out in the home's statement of purpose. They should also play a key role in shaping the ethos of the home through developing a culture of high aspiration for children which is demonstrated

through the care, resources and opportunities offered to the children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.4)

- Ensure that the registered person reviews all incidents of control, discipline and restraint and provides regular scrutiny to ensure their use is fair and suitably recorded. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)
- Ensure that the registered manager's monitoring of the home includes a review that focuses on the care provided by the home, the experiences of the young people living there and the impact the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the young people. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)
- Ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risk to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them, with particular regard to independent travel and return-home times. When there are safeguarding concerns, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risk on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a private organisation and is registered to provide care and accommodation for four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
19/01/2016	Full	Outstanding
26/02/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Requires improvement
The home has a stable staff team, which provides individual care to young people. There is evidence that staff try to build positive relationships with young people, and they and their families have provided good feedback. One social worker stated that the young person was, 'Treated like an individual, and reported good relationships with staff.' A young person reported that he liked the staff and would be able to go to a trusted adult for help and advice. However, there are missed opportunities to develop and strengthen bonds between staff and the current young people. They would benefit from more age-appropriate routines to assist with personal care, bedtimes and settling, and more nurturing activities such as games, films and suitable toys. A recommendation is made to address this matter. Some young people do not access suitable educational provision that is delivered in a timely manner. There is a delay in ensuring that the educational needs of children who are of compulsory school age are being met. For example, one young person who arrived at the home in July 2016 did not begin education until October 2016. There is some evidence of the registered manager pursuing appropriate opportunities. However, there is no constructive challenge made to the local authority and insufficient provision of meaningful alternatives. When appropriate provision is identified, engagement from young people is inconsistent and a lack of behaviour management planning has resulted in staff not always addressing this appropriately. A requirement is made to address this matter. Young people are supported to make decisions and choices within their lives and to use advocacy services when appropriate. They are supported to make complaints using the procedures at the home and feel they can talk to staff should they have a concern. Young people attend weekly house meetings, where they are able to suggest activities they would like to attend. Staff facilitate access to these activities. However, this is provided on an insufficient, ad hoc basis rather than a planned routine approach to valuable recreational opportunities. As a result, young people frequently spend more of their time unsupervised in the local area, sometimes engaging in risk-taking behaviour, such as smoking cannabis and fire-setting. A requirement is made to address this matter. Three young people have moved on from the service since the last inspection. Those young people had been supported to achieve a positive routine in their day-to-day experiences. One social worker said, 'Staff worked tirelessly on motivating the young person.' Another spoke highly of the home's ability to bring stability to a young person. However, the new residents to the home have not achieved stability and the	

boundaries are not always clear or age-appropriate. Care planning is inconsistent, and this results in poor quality of key-working sessions. For example, sessions do not address the emotions or thoughts that young people may present through behavioural difficulties. Likewise, staff do not use specialist services or resources to aid early intervention and prevention on matters such as substance misuse and antisocial behaviour. A requirement is made to address this matter.

Previous residents have been well supported to make positive transitions. One team manager provided feedback to the home, stating that, 'The staff have been a valuable resource in supporting the young person in his transition to a new placement.' It was important that he ended the placement on good terms with the staff and residents, and this was achieved through a final summer holiday with the placement.'

The home has developed a good relationship with a local healthcare partner and have been proactive in seeking training on specific issues to support a young person's health needs. However, healthcare planning arrangements for young people are not consistently clear or robustly followed. For example, some young people's identified emotional health needs are not being met, and specific healthcare planning for one young person was unclear and contradictory. A requirement is made to address this matter.

The home clearly promotes family contact arrangements. The staff have worked progressively with some families to support planned contact, which has resulted in positive overall outcomes for young people. However, when young people are unwilling to adhere to contact arrangements, there are insufficient planning and behaviour management strategies to overcome such difficulties. Consequently, there is an adverse impact on the continuity of care provided by the home and its ability to supervise those young people sufficiently. A recommendation is made to address this matter.

Some young people are placed out of borough. Social workers report that staff work well with young people and communication is described as good. However, some concerns are raised about a lack of age appropriate supervision in the evenings. There were also aspects of those young people's social developmental needs and emotional well-being that were not sufficiently being addressed. For example, a social worker stated that the relationships a young person had formed, both inside and outside of the home were not in his best interests and the young person had felt some peer pressure to engage in risk-taking behaviour such as substance misuse. This is detrimental to his behavioural and emotional security. The young person said that this was the reason he had absconded back to his home town. A requirement is made to address this matter.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Since the last inspection, there have been three new admissions to the home. The registered manager undertakes informal impact risk assessments prior to admission in order to make a decision on the suitability of potential new admissions. However, when new residents have a history of instability, missing from home and non-attendance within education, managers do not suitably consider how they are to meet the young person's presenting needs. For example, plans to reduce risk at the point of admission. Consequently, managers and staff work on a reactionary approach to the risk factors presented by young people. A requirement is made to address this matter. Generic risk assessments are completed for most young people in the home. Risks are reviewed monthly by managers and staff. However, assessments do not identify how risks are to be managed, what strategies are to be used or what methods are in place to reduce risks. For example, fire-setting, substance misuse and absence from the home. The registered manager said, 'All staff know what to do because we discuss it in the team meetings.' Although there are records of discussions between staff, there are no clear directives recorded. A staff member said, 'The group we have now are much younger. We are trying to build relationships in order to work with them.' Consequently, the risks presented by young people are not responded to in a planned and effective manner. A recommendation is made to address this matter. Young people are regularly absent from home. Incidents of absences range from several hours to several days. Managers and staff follow reporting protocols and liaise consistently with families. However, effective action to return a young person from a known location (such as the family home) is not taken. For example, when it is known that a young person will absent themselves to return to the family home, there are no plans in place to reduce the level of absences or strategies to ensure their safe return. A parent said, 'My child is at my home more than the children's home. Staff don't come to collect him and I find him hard to manage.' At the time of the inspection, one young person had been with a family member for five days without a visit from the home, while another persistently returned home without an action plan to reduce this behaviour. As a result, there is a lack of clarity among staff with regard to the overall reduction and management of those young people who are frequently absent from the home. A requirement under risk management is made to address this matter. Some young people find great difficulty in managing their own behaviour. This results in bouts of aggression, assault and damage. Staff say, 'We try and defuse or ignore behaviour, but sometimes it can escalate if they don't get what they want.' However, behaviour management plans do not identify specific behaviours, their individual risks or what strategies staff are to follow in order to defuse potential	

disruption. Discussions with the registered manager and staff highlight that sanctions are imposed, such as vehicle bans and restricted pocket money, but there is no evaluation of the effectiveness of these measures. Currently, the response to young people's behaviour is reactionary rather than planned. Consequences are inconsistently applied and there are no clear agreed boundaries which young people can work toward. A recommendation is made to address this matter.

Records of incidents of bullying are held in the home. There are no recorded incidents since the last inspection. Young people say that they can identify an adult to talk to if they have a concern and they feel safe in the home. However, of the three young people, two were found to have knives hidden in their bedroom. While the knives were removed and placing authorities were updated, there is no evidence of work being undertaken to establish why the young people had the knives and what their intentions were. Risk assessments are not updated, nor do they recognise the potential risks of a young person with a knife with previous self-harming behaviours. The failure to identify risks means that they cannot be suitably managed, monitored or reviewed for patterns or trends. A requirement under risk management is made to address this matter.

The current group accommodated within the home are aged between 12 and 13 years old. While staff encourage them to develop friendships away from the home, such as the local park, they are also provided with travel passes in order to meet friends and spend time with them. However, staff are unclear where young people are travelling to, who they are spending time with or what they are doing. Young people have a 9.00pm curfew, but this is not always adhered to. A parent said, 'My child is out too late and this worries me. He gets the bus back to the home late at night and he is 12.' A social worker stated, 'While I feel the home is doing what they can to work with the young person, I feel they are out late and not suitably supervised. The registered manager said, 'Curfews are based on court directives.' Consequently, young people's safety is compromised because age-appropriate planning and risk management is not in place. A requirement is made to address this matter.

Evidence highlights that some young people return under the influence of cannabis. Likewise, records show that staff have witnessed young people using cannabis outside the property. According to the registered manager, one young person sold his Xbox for cannabis, and during the inspection attempted to steal the home's Xbox. The registered manager said, 'While we suspect they are under the influence, we cannot prove it. We provide written information about the dangers of cannabis and will supervise monies where we feel necessary.' Given the current age range within the home, the day-to-day arrangements fail to take into account risk factors presented by this type of behaviour. There is a lack of planned preventative work in order to address and reduce the current substance misuse. A requirement is made to address this matter.

There are occasions when young people's behaviour poses a risk to themselves or

others. While the home has a history of not using physical intervention, there have been three recent occasions where this has been necessary. On the whole, young people and staff are offered a debrief to discuss the reasons for the intervention and to evaluate the outcome. However, behaviour management plans and risk assessments do not identify triggers for explosive behaviours or strategies to manage these in a consistent manner. A recommendation is made to address this matter.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The registered manager has over 20 years' experience working with children and young people in a residential setting. He holds the diploma in social work and has completed the level 5 diploma in leadership and management. Internal and external monitoring takes place at regular intervals and reports are provided to Ofsted in accordance with regulation. However, both the internal and external monitoring reports do not consistently identify inconsistent practice specifically regarding care planning and managing risk. Critical monitoring is essential to ensuring consistent quality of care in the home and highlighting areas for development. A recommendation is made to address this matter. Young people are supported by a stable staff team. The majority of staff are qualified at NVQ level 3 and have experience in working within a residential setting. Young people say, 'I like most of the staff, we get on OK. I can talk to them if I need to and they will help me.' Staff confirm that they are in receipt of regular supportive supervision. They feel that the registered manager is helpful and approachable and will offer advice and guidance regularly. According to managers and staff, online staff training takes place at regular intervals. In-service and external agency training is also provided to all staff. However, no specific training has been undertaken in order to work effectively with the current age group. The home fails to offer a warm, nurturing, safe and consistent service to the current resident group. A recommendation is made to address this matter. Young people's records are securely held within the home to protect confidentiality. While records are regularly reviewed, the registered manager does not identify deficits in the recording and planning for care as identified within this report. The focus must now be on establishing a practice that suitably addresses and meets the needs of those young people accommodated.	

On the whole, notifications of serious events are forwarded to Ofsted in accordance with regulation. However, there are some matters, such as young people setting fires, possession of knives and being absent for extended periods of time that are not reported. Failure to forward this information to Ofsted means that the regulatory body does not receive a consistent overview of concerns within the home or how they are being managed. A requirement is made to address this matter.

At the last interim inspection in January 2016 no requirements or recommendations were made. In order to address the shortfalls in practice, 10 requirements and nine recommendations are made to improve practice.

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 children looked after 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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