

SC021683

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 offers care and accommodation for four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities. It is one of a number of children's homes run by a private organisation.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 June 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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.

Date of last inspection: 29 September 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- Educational attendance and attainment is inconsistent.
- Care planning arrangements do not reflect individual goals and targets.
- In-house strategies to manage young people's health where drug use is a concern are insufficient.
- Risk assessment and risk management is inconsistent and ineffective.
- Behaviour management methods are inconsistent and ineffective.
- Young people regularly absent themselves from the home.
- Bullying between peers in the community is not suitably addressed.
- External monitoring arrangements for the home are deficient.
- Internal monitoring reports do not accurately reflect the care provided in the home.
- Internal monitoring arrangements do not identify areas for development or where improvements are made.
- Young people's progress is not reviewed and little action is taken to review the continued suitability of the placement.

The children's home's strengths:

- Young people form stable relationships with staff.
- Young people feel consulted and can offer their views and opinions on matters regarding the home.
- Physical intervention is rarely used in the home.
- Staff receive regular supervision and training.
- All staff are trained at NVQ level 3.
- Staff feel suitably supported by the registered manager.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/09/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
08/06/2016	Full	Good
26/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
04/08/2015	Full	Requires improvement

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
12: The protection of children standard The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. Managers and staff must 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. Staff must have the skills to identify and act on any signs that a child is at risk of harm, the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(vi)(b))	06/07/2017
13: The leadership and management standard The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that promotes their welfare, understands the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and uses this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation (13)(1)(b)(2)(f))	06/07/2017
14: The care planning standard The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14(1)(a))	06/07/2017
45: Review of quality of care The registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— (a) the quality of care provided for children; (b) the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it;	06/07/2017

and (c) any actions the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided. Specifically, in relation to a clear analysis of the progress or otherwise young people make within the service. Regulation 45(2)(a)(b)(c))	
35: Behaviour management policies and records The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. (Regulation 35(2))	06/07/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that the children's home staff act as effective advocates for, or on behalf of, the child who may be experiencing difficulties with education or training matters including, but not limited to, attainment, admissions, attendance or behaviour, as any good parent would. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.12)
- Where there is a possibility that a child will run away or go missing from a children's home placement, their placement plan should include a strategy to minimise this risk. If the child is a looked after child, their care plan arranged by the placing authority should include such a strategy. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.24)
- Ensure that the specific responsibilities of the home towards supporting the health and well-being of each child, specifically relating to drug misuse, are agreed with the placing authority and recorded in their plan. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.7)
- Ensure that arrangements for contact, including risk assessments, are included in the placement plan agreed between the registered person and the child's placing authority. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.15)
- Ensure that the home only accepts placements where they are satisfied that they can respond to the child's assessed needs and have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group. Managers must take timely and appropriate action where the needs of the child cannot be appropriately met. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires

improvement to be good

Since the last inspection in September 2016, one young person has been discharged back to their home community and one young person has been admitted. One young person has now lived at the home for a period of four years, while another has been in placement for over twelve months. At the time of the inspection, three young people are living at the home.

Young people build positive relationships with staff. One young person said, 'I really like the staff, we all get on well. I like the manager and I like living here.' Young people and staff engage well and share appropriate banter and jokes.

Educational attendance and attainment is inconsistent. Although one young person attained 100% attendance and is making good progress, this is not the case for all young people. One young person's attendance has significantly reduced, resulting in him failing to undertake planned GCSEs. Likewise, a new admission to the home is also failing to attend school on a consistent basis. While staff verbalise the importance of education, there is an acceptance that young people will choose not to attend. Staff are not provided with effective systems or strategies to appropriately manage and challenge the refusal to attend school. Consequently, some young people do not learn the value and importance of their education and how this impacts on their personal aspirations and future life chances.

Placement planning requires improvement to be good. Not all young people benefit from individually planned care. Although placement plans are completed, effective strategies to achieve individual targets and goals are not a consistent feature in the home. For example, the majority of keywork sessions take place as a reaction to a situation or circumstance. Sessions are not planned in accordance with the individual plans or in order to effect change in young people's lives. A staff member said, 'Most of our work is dealing with issues that arise.' This lack of strategic thinking in assessing need and planning care results in young people not understanding the aims of the placement or investing in it.

Young people are registered with the appropriate medical services and receive regular visits from the local looked after children's nurse, who said, 'The home is very good at letting me know when a new young person has moved in, or if there are any health concerns. I work with the home to try and address any worries.' Healthcare plans detail the appointments young people have attended and those that are also refused. Staff also recognise where young people may need additional help, and make appropriate referrals to counselling services and the child and adolescent mental health teams. However, where young people refuse to accept any additional help, for example, to address drug-related matters, there are no systems in the home to aid the reduction of drug misuse. This means that those young people who are regular drug users do not have a tailored plan to address their addiction.

Most young people enjoy regular planned contact with family and friends. This contact is suitably supported by staff to ensure that young people have a positive contact experience. However, risk assessments that are required for some family contacts are not routinely completed. For example, where a young person has previously shown aggression to family members. The failure to ensure that suitable risk management

compromises the success of important contact between the young person and their family.

Regular one-to-one meetings take place to ensure that young people can have a voice in the day-to-day planning for their care, such as individual menus, activities and decor. Young people engage well in these meetings. One young person said, 'We talk about all sorts. Staff keep us informed and we can ask questions or make suggestions.' As a result, young people understand that their views and opinions are valued by staff, and are appropriately responded to.

Young people are encouraged to try out new activities. They are helped to choose from a range of indoor and outdoor recreational activities from go-carting to climbing. However, most young people do not engage and prefer to spend time in the community, where they develop friendships with groups that have a negative impact on them, such as drug use or anti-social behaviour. Furthermore, some young people struggle to recognise abusive peer relationships, particularly in the community. Where these concerns arise, prompt action to reduce or manage this risk is not taken. Consequently, young people's vulnerabilities are not suitably protected when they are away from the home.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Risk management requires improvement. The home constructs generic risk assessments for all young people which cover a range of risk-taking behaviours. These assessments are organisational documents that are not specific to each individual young person. Therefore, assessments do not identify the details of personal risk or how they are to be managed. Although the assessments are regularly reviewed, there is no evidence to suggest amendments for improved risk management.

Since the last inspection in September 2016, there has been a rise in young people being away from the home for extended periods of time. Staff follow procedures and make appropriate missing reports to the police and local authority in accordance with the young person's generic risk assessment. However, staff fail to effectively plan work with the young people to address and manage these risks. As a result, young people continue with risk-taking behaviours and regularly absent themselves from the home.

Staff receive annual training in the use of physical intervention. One member of staff said, 'We always try to defuse any challenges, and restraint is a last resort.' Since the last inspection, there has been one incident requiring a minor intervention.

Young people know how to complain. One young person said, 'We have meetings with our keyworkers and they always ask if we are happy or want to complain. We can use forms or call Childline. We can speak to a family member or our social workers. I feel staff listen to me.' There have been no complaints from young people since the last inspection.

Behaviour management methods require improvement to be good. Although the home has a policy for the management of unacceptable behaviour, this is not clear. For example, incidents of unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour are not recorded in the

consequence book, nor is there a record of the action taken to address such behaviours or how they are to be managed in the future. A staff member said, 'If young people exhibit unacceptable behaviour, they lose their daily incentive of £2.' Although this is a sanction, this is not recorded as such. Furthermore, this measure does not address the negative behaviour or provide young people with the tools to change their behaviour.

Young people are looked after on a one-to-one basis. At the time of the inspection, two young people are accommodated in the home's independent flats and one young person in the children's home. There are no recorded episodes of bullying since the last inspection. One young person said, 'Sometimes other kids gets on your nerves, but there isn't bullying.' Another young person said, 'If there was bullying, the staff would sort it out.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager has been in post for over ten years. He has extensive residential experience working with children and young people and is qualified at NVQ level 4.

Internal monitoring arrangements are in place. The registered manager provides a six-monthly report detailing the progress young people make. However, the monitoring of the home is not a clear reflection of how the home is operating. For example, monitoring fails to provide a clear analysis of the strengths and areas for improvement in the home. Likewise, information does not take into account the issues young people face as detailed in this inspection. Consequently, there is no clear direction for improvement.

External monitoring of the home takes place on a monthly basis in accordance with regulation. However, information provided in this report is confusing. For example, reports state that young people are all working in accordance with their individual plans, although there is little evidence in the home to confirm this. Likewise, reports do not include an analysis of the quality of care provided in the home. The business manager said, 'Having seen the reports, I can see they are not reflective of the service.' Consequently, the current external monitoring arrangements are deficient.

Staff confirm that they receive regular formal and informal supervision from the registered manager. They feel supported and are able to seek guidance and advice where necessary. Staff receive regular mandatory training and also complete on-line training via the social care hub. One staff member said, 'The company training is good. If there are any new trends coming up, they always make sure they put a course on to cover it.'

Young people are supported by a staff team qualified at NVQ level 3. Many of the staff have worked together for a number of years and, therefore, have formed a stable team. One staff member said, 'I enjoy coming to work. Every day is different. We all work together to help the young people.'

The registered manager assesses all new referrals to the home. However, where a placement is offered, suitable planning for care is not consistently undertaken. This means that targets are not identified and, where behaviours deteriorate or risks increase, managers and staff do not have a prepared strategy to effectively manage the

situation. Comparatively, staff pride themselves on a 'no discharge' philosophy. A staff member said, 'We take difficult young people and will do everything we can not to discharge them. We want to keep good relationships with the local authorities and ensure future referrals.' This means that, although some young people do not make consistent progress towards their placement goals and targets, they remain in placement.

At the last interim inspection, one requirement and three recommendations were made to improve practice. The requirement to lead and inspire a culture of high-quality care is restated at this inspection. One of the three recommendations is also restated. Consistent review of the appropriateness of placements is not yet undertaken.

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 who 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: SC021683

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

Responsible individual: Vivien Snape

Registered manager: Eric Healey

Inspector

Maria McGranaghan, social care regulatory inspector

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