

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	8 June 2016
Unique reference number	SC021683
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	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

Inspection date	8 June 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	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC021683

Summary of findings

This children's home provision is good because:

- Young people develop in confidence and self-esteem while living in the home.
- Educational attendance and attainment are greatly improved. Young people have a vision for their future and feel that they can achieve.
- Young people engage well with staff and have formed trusting relationships.
- Primary healthcare needs are suitably addressed.
- Consultation with young people is well planned. Young people are eager to engage and voice valuable views and opinions.
- Contact with important people such as family and friends is well maintained and supported.
- Young people make and sustain close relationships within the community that enable them to build friendships and develop ownership of the community in which they live.
- Staff support young people to try out a range of activities. This enables young people to develop new skills and build confidence in community social settings.
- Young people with a history of disruptive behaviour settle in the home. Disruption is significantly reduced.
- Since living in the home, risks including child sexual exploitation and child protection concerns are significantly reduced.
- Risk assessments are in place. Consequently, young people develop ownership of their goals and are keen to show progress.
- Behaviour management systems are linked to the individual needs of the resident young people. They are suitable. Young people do not present with the concerns noted in their previous residential settings.
- Relationships with some external agencies are formed. This means that some young people's risks are assessed collectively and managed in a way that reduces risk.
- Young people confirm that they are aware of the complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. Records evidence that managers and staff respond quickly and appropriately to any concerns being reported in the home.
- Positive internal and external monitoring of the home takes place. Areas for further development are responded to quickly.
- Staff benefit from regular training opportunities, including a range of targeted training. This provides staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake work with young people with complex needs.

- Supervision is consistent. Staff feel exceptionally well supported and are happy and motivated within their work with young people. The majority of the staff team members have worked in the home for over sixteen years.
- Young people benefit from a small consistent staff team. Strong relationships are formed between young people and staff.
- The home is well maintained and provides spacious accommodation for those accommodated.

Two requirements and four recommendations are made at this inspection to address shortfalls in practice.

- Internal monitoring must take into account the quality and consistency of the work recorded in the home.
- Staff teams should be complemented by a mix of genders.
- Records of consequences must be clear and unambiguous.
- Records of room searches must include where items have been removed and where they are stored.
- Young people should be encouraged to regularly review their file and record their views and opinions.
- Staff who experience difficulty in recording either in written form or in electronic form should undertake specific training to improve the standards of their work.

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.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
13	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)).	29 July 2016
13	The registered person must ensure that the home employs a sufficient number and balance of staff, with specific regard to the employment of female staff (Regulation 13).	29 July 2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that all incidents of control and discipline are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that they are fair, consistent and suitably recorded ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36).
- Ensure that young people are actively encouraged to read their records and to add further information to them. They should be regularly reminded of their rights to see information kept about them and be given information about how they might be supported to access their records in later life ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.6).
- Ensure that where immediate search of a child's room is necessary because there is reasonable grounds for believing that there is a risk to the child or another person's well-being, records should contain where any removed items are stored ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.20).
- Ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs, specifically with regard to computer and recording skills

('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home registered to care for up to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26 January 2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
4 August 2015	Full	Requires improvement
24 March 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good
The majority of young people living in the home have experienced numerous placement breakdowns, resulting in disengagement with education and difficulty in forming and sustaining relationships. Since living at this home, young people make steady progress in all areas including education, behaviour management and forming trusting relationships. Young people with a history of educational disruption and non-attendance now attend suitable school, college and work placements. Progress is mostly good with some young people undertaking GCSE examinations and securing full-time employment. Young people say, 'I am happy to be at school. I have made new friends and want to [make] something of my life. I think I can do it now.' Relationships with staff are very good. As a result, young people have developed better self-confidence and are able to express their views and opinions openly and in a controlled and mature way. Young people speak highly of staff and say, 'This isn't like anywhere I have lived before. Staff listen and don't nag me. They help us with everything. I am doing so much better now.' Consultation with young people is a key strength in the care practice within this home. Young people engage well within individual consultation meetings held by the registered manager. They routinely comment on these meetings and add their own ideas, views and opinions. Key work sessions, group discussions and contact with an independent advocate also take place regularly within the home. This ensures that young people can express any views or concerns independently of the home. Young people say, 'I can tell staff anything. I know they will sort things out for me, I trust them. If I felt I couldn't talk to staff I would talk to my parents or social worker.' Young people are registered with health services such as doctors, dentists and opticians and have regular health reviews with the looked after children's nurse. Likewise, young people benefit from key work and group sessions that address matters such as healthy diet and exercise. Targets are outlined within the healthcare plan and highlight some services that offer additional support in areas such as smoking cessation. A young person said, 'It's good because we can ask anything without being shy. Staff help a lot and make it easy for us to discuss things.' Young people are encouraged to take part in community activities. Regular trips to the seaside, football, gym and go-cart track take place. For some young people, engaging in activities can prove difficult. However, staff work hard to overcome any anxieties, enabling young people to develop self-confidence, while also developing skills in making new friendships outside of the home. Young people say, 'If I want to	

try something staff will always sort it out for me. They will come with me and support me.'

Placement planning is good. Young people are clear about the aims of this placement and state that they feel that they are making progress toward their goals. A social worker said, 'My child is very settled. This is the first time he has settled since coming into care. He is happy and making progress. We are delighted.' Key work sessions are undertaken and include matters such as contact, behaviour, drugs, risk and progress. However, there are inconsistencies in the way that sessions are recorded. For example, some records are not written in a way that is helpful for the young person. Some are difficult to decipher, while others do not include a review of progress from their initial starting points. Therefore, young people lack interest in reviewing their file and the progress that they make. A good practice recommendation is made to address this matter.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with family and friends. Staff work together with placing authorities to ensure that contact is purposeful, positive and in the best interest of young people. Since living in the home, some young people have re-established contact with family members and say, 'I have contact every weekend and it is going really well.'

Personal hygiene and self-image are also consistently promoted, resulting in young people taking a pride in their appearance. A young person said, 'I have all the Manchester United kit.' While another young person said, 'I have my own style and the staff help me to get the things I need.' Young people presented as smart, clean and tidy and clearly are taking pride in their appearance.

Residents benefit from accommodation that encompasses two fully operational independent flats. They are helped by staff to develop skills to equip them in their adult life. Activities such as shopping, cooking, menu planning and washing and ironing are a sample of the work undertaken. Furthermore, young people learn in a positive and nurturing environment. This kind of role modelling enables young people to develop in areas such as compromise, empathy and respect for each other's differences. Consequently, they learn how to express their emotions in a controlled and suitable way.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Young people come to the home with a history of risk-taking behaviours. Staff develop risk assessments to ensure that appropriate action is taken to reduce any potential risks, including direct work and support from external services. Where risks are identified, suitable action is taken to safeguard the young person in the home. Historically, levels of being missing or absent from the home have been high. However, since the last full inspection there has been a significant decrease in this type of behaviour. This is good progress. However, on occasions, delays in recording information, such as the details of a young person's return from a period of going	

missing, result in staff not being fully aware of important information. The registered manager said, 'The staff are getting used to a new electronic system which sometimes means there are delays.' The manager agreed that further training is required in this area to ensure that all information is recorded in a timely manner. A recommendation is made within the leadership section of this report.

Socially acceptable behaviour is encouraged in the home. Behaviour management plans are in place to identify strategies to manage and reduce unacceptable behaviour, including the use of sanctions and key work sessions. However, records are inconsistent. For example, some records are not fully completed, while others are unclear. For example, staff record a loss of bonus or activity for a resident who is reported as missing. The registered manager accepted that additional monitoring is needed to ensure a consistent approach to all records. A good practice recommendation is made to address this matter.

Staff focus on de-escalation and redirection techniques in order to diffuse situations between young people. This has proven successful. There are only three physical interventions recorded in a sixteen-year period. Consequently, and as a result of trusting and secure relationships between staff and young people, young people develop strategies to manage their own behaviour, resulting in a reduction of challenging and inappropriate behaviours.

Privacy and dignity is respected in the home. Young people learn to respect each other and the staff team. Where concerns arise warranting a search of a young person's bedroom, young people are informed of the reason for the search and can be present during the process. Although this measure is minimal, records do not reflect where items would be stored for safe keeping if they were removed from the bedroom. A recommendation is made to ensure that any item belonging to the young person must be logged and a record maintained of where it is stored.

Young people are supported to live together and respect each other as individuals with different life experiences, needs and opinions. They are helped to learn about behaviours such as bullying both from a victim and perpetrator perspective. Some key work sessions and young people's meetings provide evidence that young people understand the impact of bullying. This enables them to take the appropriate action where necessary. Young people say, 'It's good here, I feel safe.'

Young people know how to complain. Information is provided in the young people's guide and organisational complaints documents. Procedures for managing complaints are in place and evidence demonstrates that they are handled fairly and investigated thoroughly by the manager or external nominated person. Young people say, 'The staff are fair and they do listen to us. If we want to speak to an external person they always arrange it.'

The service is one detached building divided into a two-bedroomed residential service and two fully equipped independent training flats. The interior of the home is clean and suitably furnished, providing suitable space for young people. The registered manager has completed a community area risk assessment. This provides good information about amenities, leisure, health and crime in the local area and

also links to how the home manages risks presented by young people.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The registered manager has managed this service for sixteen years and will retire from his position in May 2017. Plans are in place to recruit an experienced replacement manager who will work alongside the current registered manager prior to his retirement. Young people are at the centre of the home's practice. Staff say, 'We know these young people have had many placements and we really don't want to see them moving and moving. We all work really hard and through some difficult times to show them we are there for them. We think it works, because eventually they settle and stay for long periods of time.' The home meets the aims and objectives of the statement of purpose, and young people, their families and social workers are clear about the service and support that the home provides. The home employs a committed and enthusiastic team that has been with the service for many years. They are all qualified at National Vocational Qualification level 3. The training of staff at this level ensures that they are suitably qualified in the care and management of young people. Additionally, staff receive regular mandatory training and targeted training, specifically with regard to the changing needs of young people. However, staff do not receive suitable training in areas such as record keeping and computer skills. Therefore, some records are inconsistent or poorly recorded. A good practice recommendation is made in respect of this matter. Staff receive regular formal and informal supervision and say, 'The registered manager is very supportive and we all support each other. We are all very committed to helping young people achieve the best they can. We all enjoy working here and that is why there are hardly ever any staff changes.' However, it is noted that the residential team are all male. The registered manager said, 'We have only taken male placements for a very long time and some can be very challenging. It can be difficult to recruit women to this role.' As a result, the only female influence currently working at the home is the deputy manager who does not complete sleep in duties. Consequently, young people do not benefit from a balance of genders within the staff team. A requirement is made to address the shortfall in this area. Regular internal and external monitoring takes place. This goes some way to identifying the progress that young people make and the areas where the home needs to develop. However, internal monitoring does not take account of the variable quality of work recorded in the home. Consequently, inconsistencies, gaps and poor quality are not routinely flagged as an area for improvement. In order for monitoring to be effective and evaluative, it must take account of the quality of records in the home. A requirement is made to address the shortfall in this area.	

The registered manager and staff demonstrate a commitment to improving the lives of young people. The effectiveness of their approach is measurable in the progress that young people make. However, to secure future improvements the registered manager and staff must ensure that records reflect the work undertaken with the residents.

The manager is aware of the procedures for notifying Ofsted of all incidents under Regulation 40 and since the last inspection has been consistent in doing so. This practice ensures that information is shared with the regulatory agency in order that actions and outcomes for young people can be suitably assessed.

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 that 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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