

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC021683
Inspector	Charlie Bamber
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Care Today (Children's Services) Ltd
Registered person address	Lansdowne House 85 Buxton Road STOCKPORT Cheshire SK2 6LR
Responsible individual	Vivien Anne Snape
Registered manager	Eric Joseph Healey
Date of last inspection	19/11/2014

Inspection date	24/03/2015
Previous inspection	adequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection

This home was judged adequate at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **sustained effectiveness**.

The home is led by a suitably qualified and very experienced Registered Manager with the support of an experienced deputy manager. The staffing team is stable with many members of staff having been in post for more than ten years. There is a strong focus on the delivery of care to the young people, and ensuring they have appropriate support from staff.

At the last full inspection a requirement was made in respect of training. All staff members have now undertaken training in sexualised behaviour and this requirement is therefore met. A further requirement was made in respect of the Regulation 33 visitor having permission from placing authorities to view the young people's records. At the time of this inspection this had not been met, with three out of the four social workers for the young people not having given written consent.

Young people report being happy and settled in placement. There have been no complaints or grumbles since the last inspection. Young people are consulted about their care on a regular basis, with weekly meetings recorded for each young person. Their views are actively sought during these meetings and they have ample opportunity to talk about their wishes and feelings. However, recording of some young people's meetings is confusing and a recommendation is therefore made to improve the clarity of these recordings.

Some young people continue to go missing from home. The home appropriately follows Greater Manchester Safeguarding Partnership guidelines when young people go missing. Most young people have risk assessments in place that include sections on missing from home, although one young person did not have a missing from home risk assessment, despite having previously gone missing from home. A recommendation is made to ensure all young people have missing from home risk assessments.

Young people are educated on site, and their engagement with education shows progress from their starting points, although there is still a long way to go for some young people to achieve consistent attendance in education. Two young people are not involved in work, training or education, although both are preparing to move on in the very near future. One young person was supported to engage in employment for a sustained period of time and this was a positive experience.

The home provides a safe physical environment for young people. The front doorbell has been replaced since the previous inspection and portable electrical appliance testing has taken place. The interior decoration of the home is looking somewhat tired and the bathrooms required cleaning. A settee in one young person's flat was stained and there was a rip in an armchair. A recommendation has been made to improve the standard of furnishings.

Young people continue to place themselves at risk. Whilst missing, one young person was involved in a serious road traffic accident and required hospitalisation. Another young person recently went missing and was involved in criminal activity. At the time of the inspection a young person had been absent for a lengthy period of time. Although the home was in regular contact with him, they were unable to ensure his safe return to the home, and unable to provide an address for where he was staying. One young person has been extensively involved in the use of legal high drugs. Staff have worked hard to educate him about the risks and at the time of the inspection, he had not used any of these legal drugs for several weeks.

Young people report good relationships with staff, and observations support this. They report feeling cared about and supported in making progress and achieving their goals. One young person said 'staff are great, they couldn't be better and they couldn't do anything different, they really support me...they check in on me all the time, I see them loads'. Staff take pride in the amount of time they spend with young people and the level of care and commitment they offer. Several young people stay in touch after they move on and the staff continue to provide informal support to them.

Young people believe the rules and boundaries to be fair. Sanctions and rewards are regularly recorded, although the home prides itself on being accepting of very difficult behaviour and using a calm and persistent approach to gradually ensure young people conform to rules and boundaries. The preference is for a non-confrontational approach, with use of gentle persuasion and speaking to the young people about how conforming to rules and boundaries is in their best interests, and is to help keep them safe and make progress. This results in the minimal use of sanctions and in staff not using restrictive physical interventions. One young person said the reason he liked living at the home was because 'they are not on your back all the time'.

Other agencies working with the home report that working relationships could be improved by better communication. Conversely, one grandparent reported that

communication between himself and the home was very good and felt that he was kept very well informed. Other areas for improvement are in the standard of record keeping, and ensuring all hand written records are clear, accurate and legible, which the Registered Manager acknowledges needs to be improved.

Overall, some progress has been made from the last inspection. However, some additional areas for improvement have been identified at this inspection, resulting in a judgement of sustained effectiveness.

Information about this children's home

The home, run by a company, provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities. The home is organised so that it offers both a small family-group type of placement for two young people, and two supported, self-contained, living units.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/11/2014	Full	adequate
20/03/2014	Interim	inadequate progress
07/01/2014	Full	good
27/02/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
33 (2001)	ensure the independent person when carrying out a visit under regulation 33, shall inspect the premises of the children's home, and such of the children's home's records as the independent person requires, save for a child's case records, unless the child's placing authority consent to the inspection of those records by the independent person (Regulation 33(1)(8)(b))	24/04/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure the homes procedures are compatible with and have regard to the runaway and missing from home and care protocols and procedures maintained and managed by the police and the local authority, this relates specifically, to missing from care risk assessments (NMS 5.6)
- The home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. (NMS 10.3)
- Entries in records are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguish as far as possible between fact, opinion and third party information (NMS 22.4)

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.