

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	31/01/2017
Unique reference number	SC023736
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited
Registered provider address	Ethelbert Specialist Homes, Cheesemans Farmhouse, Alland Grange Lane, Manston, RAMSGATE CT12 5BZ

Responsible individual	Leslie Davenport
Registered manager	Madison Jazz
Inspector	John Pledger

Inspection date	31/01/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judges that it has declined in effectiveness. Current staffing levels are not adequate to consistently and safely meet the care and behavioural demands of the children currently placed in the home. The practice of bringing staff in on a part-time basis from other homes in the organisation, to provide additional support at planned times, undermines continuity of care and does not contribute to teamwork and staff cohesion. Staff have raised their concerns about staffing levels at team meetings, and with inspectors during this inspection. The registered manager has frequently been required to become directly involved in the care and supervision of children during this inspection period and has been unable to effectively perform key management tasks. These include ensuring regular staff supervision, maintaining the monitoring of incidents and monitoring the quality of care, as well as responding to the monthly recommendations made by the independent visitor. Safeguarding practice has also been compromised at times when staff have responded to an incident in the home and become distracted, and have been unable to provide adequate levels of supervision for all the children. Although safeguarding policies, procedures and practices are clear, and staff are adequately trained in all the key areas of safeguarding children, the capacity of staff to effectively implement and apply the appropriate safeguards is not always at the required level. One young person who had been involved in a number of high-risk incidents was moved on from the home as part of a planned transition approximately two months ago, as the home was unable to reasonably ensure his safety and well-being. During the period leading up to his departure there was an escalation of disruption in the home, and the risks associated with the inadequate staffing levels rose accordingly. Although circumstances in the home have subsequently stabilised to some extent, concerns about staffing levels, and the capacity of the registered manager to maintain a leading, planning and monitoring role, remain. The staff team has also been unsettled during this inspection period, and cohesion	

and team-working have suffered. This contributed to a decline in the effectiveness of the care being provided to the children. For example, there have been lapses in maintaining current care plans, as well as a lack of planning and focus for key working. Some care plans are not sufficiently detailed, such as those relating to incontinence difficulties for some children. Not all risk assessments are sufficient to properly inform staff about how to manage specific risks and also facilitate meaningful reduction of identified risks.

During this inspection period there have, however, been some significant changes in personnel, with some staff moving on and being replaced. Current staff report improvements in team working and cohesion, but also feel stretched and vulnerable regarding their capacity to provide sufficient levels of care and supervision at all times. This contributes to children's feelings of insecurity, and reduces staff's ability to be proactive in de-escalating situations of rising risk.

Despite the shortfalls mentioned, there has been a well-managed move into the home with thorough matching and impact assessment, as well as careful planning and good liaison with the placing authority. The newly admitted child has settled well and is developing a sense of belonging and attachment to the adults.

The registered manager has maintained full control of referrals and has also played a key role in the recruitment of new staff. A new staff induction programme, tailored to the needs of the home, has been introduced. The registered manager and staff continue to seek ways of improving the homely atmosphere and the facilities for children in the home.

Children are well engaged in the home and warm, positive relationships between children and staff were observed. All children attend full-time education and staff make good use of the abundant amenities in the area to plan positive and fun leisure activities for the children. Children feel free to express their feelings. They participate in house meetings and contribute to meal selections and the planning of activities. There has been clear progress in establishing a culture of shared meals and discussion in the home.

The four recommendations made at the full inspection have been met. These related to the registered manager assuming appropriate control of recruitment and control of referrals into the home, as well as exercising full leadership in the home. The fourth recommendation referred to improving the culture of shared meals in the home.

The registered manager and her staff team display good insight into the strengths of the home and are open and honest about what requires improvement. They display motivation to bring about these changes.

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Currently, there are three male children in the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/07/2016	Full	Good
10/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21/07/2015	Full	Good
04/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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
In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person is required to: 13 (2) (d) Ensure that the home has sufficient staff to care for each child. 13 (2) (e) Ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care for each child.	31/03/17

Recommendations

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

- The registered manager must ensure that all staff receive regular supervision in accordance with the home's policy and statement of purpose and that this includes the opportunity to regularly reflect on their practice as well as how they may be affected by the behaviour of young people. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2, and page 39, paragraph 8.15)
- The registered manager must review the content of care plans to ensure that all staff are able to understand the specific needs of young people and how these can best be met. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.15)
- The registered manager must ensure that care plans for each child include the details of the day-to-day steps that staff need to take to manage their assessed risks. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection 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

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 that 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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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