

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	18/06/2015
Unique reference number	SC023737
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited
Registered person address	Ethelbert Specialist Homes, Cheesemans Farmhouse, Alland Grange Lane, Manston, RAMSGATE, CT12 5BZ

Responsible individual	Mr Leslie Davenport
Registered manager	Mrs Rebecca Wheeler
Inspector	Ms Lemmy

Inspection date	18/06/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Outstanding
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

SC023737

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- The management of a crisis situation was poor. There has been unclear and inconsistent management of the home which resulted in ineffective planning, care delivery and staff support. This includes the induction process for the new manager.
- Low staff morale means some staff members have, at times, been less responsive to young people's emotional needs. Some staff members have not consistently engaged with young people. Their ability to form meaningful relationships with new and irregular staff was hindered as a result.
- Leaders and managers do not always clearly record decisions. Consequently, staff members are not always aware of why decisions are made and they are not involved with the decision-making process or its outcomes.
- The home's response to escalating unsafe behaviours is not consistently timely and places some young people at increased periods of risks of harm.
- Incomplete records in respect of the use of methods of control, discipline and restraint means that any potential patterns or trends risk being unidentified. This prevents appropriate remedial action from being taken.
- Individual key working sessions have not been fully utilised. This is a missed opportunity for staff members to engage young people in making informed decisions about their own circumstances and futures.

The children's home strengths

- The new manager recognises the current shortfalls and is implementing the feedback received from the young people. Their views and opinions; for example, in respect of key working arrangements, are receiving a positive response.
- Leaders and managers recognised where and when it cannot meet the needs of some young people. As a result, effective partnership working arrangements have successfully enabled young people to move on.

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, in relation to the identification of risk and risk management the registered person must ensure that staff (2) (a) (i) 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	27/08/2015
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference to meeting the needs of the young people, the registered person must provide a staff team which: (1)(b) promotes their welfare (2)(e) provides continuity of care to each child	27/08/2015
35: Behaviour management policies and records Ensure that the record of control, discipline or restraint includes the date, time and location of the use of that measure. (Regulation 35 (3) (a) (iii))	27/08/2015

Recommendations

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

Ensure staff have the skills and confidence to communicate easily and understand the importance of listening to, involving and responding to the

children they care for. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 22, paragraph 4.10)

Ensure children's reasonable preferences in relation to day to day arrangements are met with consideration given to safeguarding, particularly in relation to the use of technology. Where a child's preferences are unreasonable or cannot be met for safeguarding reasons, staff should discuss this with the child to help them understand why. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 17, paragraph 3.21)

Ensure that everyone working at the home understands their roles and responsibilities and what they are authorised to decide on their own initiative. There should be clear lines of accountability. Each home must have clear arrangements in place to maintain effective management when the manager is absent, off duty or on leave. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 54, paragraph 10.20)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for a maximum of three young people, who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/02/2015	CH - Full	Outstanding
22/10/2014	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
06/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
02/10/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	requires improvement
Recent pressures on the core staff team means that additional staff have had to work in the home. This has had a negative impact on the young people. Staff have not consistently engaged with young people or made them feel safe. Consequently, young people say they are unhappy about the presence of unfamiliar staff and the resulting unsettled behaviours of their peers. The majority of the young people are making steady progress at school or college. This is enabled by staff who routinely accompany them and work in partnership with teaching staff to encourage their academic achievement. Examples of helping young people to apply for courses, attend interviews and providing space to complete coursework demonstrate staff members' strong commitment to promoting the value of education. Young people participate in a range of activities which increases their presence in the local community. Their current hobbies and interests include skating, pottery and visiting local places of interest. Young people become interested and increasingly engaged with their local area. Young people become frustrated when their plan of care is not clear and when the support they receive from external agencies is inconsistent. There are examples of staff advocating for young people but this is also inconsistent. For example, one young person has not had an allocated social worker to co-ordinate a safety plan and there is no obvious action taken by management to demonstrate that this omission has been pursued. Young people receive the health services they require, including specialist provision, such as sexual health and therapeutic input. Their appointments are supported by staff who liaise closely with these professionals. This enables young people to address their emotional difficulties and develop coping strategies. However, individual key work sessions are not consistently regular or effective. This means that young people have not had regular formally recorded individual time to further explore their emotional support needs. The manager acknowledges this shortfall and plans to introduce additional keyworkers chosen by the young people themselves. External professionals value the home. Comments from social workers and team managers include, '[name of child] is doing brilliantly and has made good progress. They have been affected by the home being unsettled but are improving now' and	

'the staff communicated well with us, kept us informed and attended all meetings'.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
The inconsistent implementation of safeguarding procedures results in variable outcomes for the young people. There are some positive examples which show staff working closely with external agencies to reduce behaviours which place young people at higher risks of sexual exploitation. In such cases staff perseveres and demonstrate their commitment to the young people in their efforts to locate them when they do go missing. Individual risk assessments identify emerging and changing concerns. However, this process does not always maintain the necessary pace and frequency of updating information when individual behaviours escalate, and become more risky. Young people are actively encouraged and supported to seek external support in attempts to reduce their risk taking behaviours. Staff members also seek the advice, guidance and support of agencies, including the police. One such example identified that a young person could not be kept safe. Managers and staff continued to support this young person during their transition to another placement. Young people are effectively guided about their safe use of the internet. Inappropriate use is identified and examples such as changing privacy settings have been effective. However, individual internet agreements have not been updated and discussed with young people. This is a missed opportunity to actively involve and educate young people in decision making about their own safety and well-being. Young people appreciate their warm and homely environment. Their comments include, 'it is like a family home'. The use of soft furnishings chosen by the young people and personalised bedrooms encourages their personal investment. This increases their sense of belonging. Young people are protected from unsuitable staff gaining employment through effective recruitment practice. Few sanctions have been used since the last inspection. Managers and staff record positive handling incidents but records of sanctions do not include sufficient evaluation. As a result, the manager is unable to analyse incidents or identify	

trends. This reduces staff members' ability to respond to identified triggers to work pro-actively in preventing incidents from reoccurring.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
Recent leadership and management arrangements have lacked sufficient clarity. The newly appointed manager is enrolled to complete the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare. She has completed an application to register with Ofsted. The manager is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and is keen to put systems in place to improve practice and ensure that risks are minimised. At the time of the inspection the area manager was supporting the home's manager. The area manager has been overseeing this home which includes the induction of a new manager. The area manager has also been involved in the move of one young person to another of the organisation's children's homes in order to support the safety and welfare needs of this child. This resulted in a number of key staff members having to also move to support the young person. The impact if this is that it left the home with a depleted staff team. Such arrangements lacked sufficient contingency planning. The introductory process for the new manager has been compromised because she had, for a short period, line management responsibility for two homes rather than focusing on her own induction needs. In addition, staff vacancies put pressure on the remaining team and contributed to low staff morale which at times, led to staff being inattentive towards the young people. Staff members from other homes were used to bridge the gaps in the duty roster and young people sometimes experienced an inconsistent approach to their care needs as a result. These reactive responses resulted in crisis management. Managers have not recorded their decisions or fully explained the strategies used for managing the situation to the staff team. As a result, staff members have not always been clear about why decisions relating to a crisis situation have been made. For the current core staff team, supervision meetings have been typically regular and focused on the young people. However, the impact of having a mixture of irregular staff members during a crisis period has prevented the delivery of cohesive and consistent care and support for the young people. The new manager is responding to feedback from staff and young people to develop and improve the home. For example, introducing more regular young	

peoples' meetings and asking young people to choose their own keyworkers. In addition, quality assurance processes aimed at monitoring the quality of care provided are being implemented.

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 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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