

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	18/06/2015
Unique reference number	SC023739
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 Tracey Bowden
Inspector	Miss Anna Williams

Inspection date	18/06/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Declined in effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC023739

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is inadequate because:

- There are significant weaknesses in the management of safeguarding concerns. Across a range of levels, staff members have failed to recognise and respond to child protection disclosures and/or allegations leaving children and young people at risk of harm and subsequent abuse. Child protection concerns are not reported to the appropriate safeguarding authorities. Allegations made against staff are not suitably investigated.
- The registered manager's monitoring of practice within the home lacks rigour and robust analysis. She fails to identify patterns evident in records and has not always implemented child protection procedures or shared concerns with safeguarding authorities where required.
- External monitoring of the home is weak. The independent person has failed to identify the significant safeguarding concerns within the home and recommend appropriate actions. Although a child told the independent person they were upset, no action was recorded within the independent visitor's report to demonstrate this was followed up.
- Risk management is poor. Assessments are not reviewed routinely after serious events and in line with the organisation's own policies.
- All the children and young people placed within the home have been reported missing since the previous inspection. For one young person this is not reducing and the frequency is escalating. The registered manager has failed to initiate a formal review of this child's placement despite the persistent episodes of missing. Staff do not update Independent Reviewing Officers about missing incidents in line with guidance. Staff do not follow the local police missing protocol consistently.
- One young person's placement plan on admission identified that the child needed a psychological assessment. Although initiated, this assessment was not fully completed. The registered manager did not ensure this assessment was prioritised and concluded. Eight months on, the young person has still not received a formal psychological or psychiatric assessment.
- Although staff verbally confirm supervision and appraisals of their practice take place, written records of these meetings are incomplete. This includes the registered manager's file which does not contain any formal supervision records for 2015.

The children's home strengths

- Children and young people maintain strong attachments with family members and to others who are important to them.
- The accommodation is of a good standard.
- Leaders have recognised some of the weaknesses within the home and took some immediate remedial action.

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
10: The health and well-being standard In order to meet the health and well-being standard, the registered person must ensure that- (2) (e) each child has access to such dental, medical, nursing, psychiatric and psychological advice, treatment and other services as the child may require.	07/08/2015
*12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, 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; (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe; (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; (v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and (vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; (e) that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is	07/08/2015

monitored regularly.	
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must ensure that- (2) (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	07/08/2015
14: The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard, the registered person must ensure that- (2) (e) the child's placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child's relevant plans is requested, if— (i) the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child's needs; (ii) the child is, or has been, persistently absent from the home without permission.	07/08/2015
*Ensure that HMCI and each other relevant person is notified without delay if— (a) a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; (b) an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; (c) there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(a - c)) and Ensure that notification made under this regulation must include details of— (i) the matter; (ii) the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and (iii) any actions taken by the registered person as a result of	07/08/2015

the matter. (Regulation 40 (5)(a)(i - iii))	
Ensure the independent person produces a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— (a) children are effectively safeguarded; and (b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (4)(a)(b))	07/08/2015

* These requirements are subject to statutory requirement notice.

Recommendations

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

The home's procedures must take into account the views of appropriate local services and have regard to police and local authority protocols for responding to missing person's incidents in the area where the home is located. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 45, paragraph 9.29)

A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 13.3)

Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) should be informed about missing and away from placement without authorisation episodes and they should address these in statutory reviews. Care staff should inform the child's social worker and the IRO that the child has returned. (Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, pages 20 and 22, paragraphs 56 and 67)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This section should outline:

This children's home provides care for up to three children with emotional and behavioural needs. It is run by a private organisation. The statement of purpose states that the home provides care for children who have a history of going missing and who may be at risk from sexual exploitation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/03/2015	CH - Interim	Declined in effectiveness
13/01/2015	CH - Full	Good
30/01/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
24/04/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	inadequate
The experiences of children and young people are inadequate because staff fail to protect them and ensure their welfare is continually promoted. There are significant weaknesses in the management of child protection practice and children and young people have not been safeguarded from harm. Children have mixed views about their experience of living in the home. One child described it as 'happy' and 'fun'. Another child stated that they felt that 'staff are always busy helping another child' and 'staff don't pay as much attention to me as I am quieter'. One child said that they felt safe living in the home but were not happy. There have been no formal complaints from children and young people or external sources since the last inspection. However, inspectors found three allegations within records which had not been identified or suitably investigated. Key working sessions take place and allow children and young people opportunity to discuss specific topics. House meetings occur every three to six weeks. Children and young people spoken to were not positive about their views being heard through these meetings and one child said they did not usually attend. Staff encourage children and young people to attend routine health appointments and specialist support such as sessions with the organisation's health promotion nurse. One young person was accommodated with the aim of an assessment by the in-house psychology service taking place. Although this assessment commenced, it was not fully completed. The registered manager failed to monitor this particular aim of the care plan and to follow up progress of this assessment to avoid drift. The young person has engaged with two child and adolescent mental health appointments recently. However, eight months on a full psychological or psychiatric assessment is still required and this young person's mental health shows signs of decline. Education outcomes for children and young people are mixed. Some young people attend regularly and make progress in reaching educational goals. One young person has recently been excluded for a short period and has subsequently stopped attending school altogether. Staff have not been successful at re-engaging	

this young person in learning.

Staff members facilitate and, where appropriate, supervise contact arrangements between children, young people and their families and those important to them. Children and young people maintain friendships with peers from school and make friends through their attendance at local community groups. One young person is making good progress in line with their identified care plan to return home to the care of a family member.

Some children and young people take part in a range of activities such as dance and drama club, cinema trips, visits to play parks, and in-house arts and crafts. One young person has mixed engagement with planned activities, but does engage with some larger group activities such as trips to theme parks.

Staff successfully assist children and young people to gain age-appropriate life skills. Children and young people take part in daily living tasks such as laundry, laying the table and cooking simple meals. One young person has succeeded in demonstrating that they are able to suitably use and keep their own basic mobile phone. Staff also supported this young person to build up unsupervised time in the community through a planned process. This young person demonstrated they could safely manage this time without staff supervision and now enjoys longer periods of unsupervised time away from the home. This helps prepare young people for independence and adulthood.

Staff create a warm and homely environment for children and young people to live in. The home is well-maintained and brightly decorated. Children and young people personalise their own bedroom space. There is a well-resourced play room with games, books, bean bags to relax on and a computer children can use with appropriate supervision.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
There are serious failings in the safeguarding of children and young people. Staff do not demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding matters. Since the previous inspection, incidents have occurred which demonstrate a failure by staff at all levels to identify, understand and effectively manage risks to children and	

young people. Senior managers such as the internal safeguarding lead and the responsible individual have failed to recognise the serious child protection deficiencies and take action. This demonstrates systemic management failings in the oversight of professional practice and does not promote the welfare of children and young people.

At the previous inspection a requirement was set to ensure written records are kept of any allegation of abuse or neglect and of any action taken in response. This has not been met. During this inspection, inspectors identified three allegations made in relation to persons who work in the home. These allegations were made by children placed in the home and by a family member. The registered manager was aware of all of these allegations but failed to implement the 'allegations against staff' policy. This leaves children at risk of harm from staff who may be unsuitable to care for them. The registered manager has not built links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. None of these allegations were referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer for consultation and advice. Children and young people are not being effectively supported and protected from harm.

A previous requirement set to ensure there are strategies to reduce the number of incidents of children going missing has not been met. Staff fail to successfully engage young people in regular preventative work around the dangers of running away. Since the previous inspection, children have been missing from the home and reported to the police on 33 separate occasions. These episodes have involved all the children and young people placed within the home. For one young person, going missing is not reducing and the frequency and length of time missing is increasing. Staff respond promptly and actively search for children and young people when they are missing.

The registered manager has failed to initiate a formal care plan review for the young person whose missing episodes are increasing. This is not in line with regulatory requirements and the home's own missing child policy. Independent Reviewing Officers are not kept up-to-date in relation to the risk taking behaviours of children and young people. They are not informed when a child or young person goes missing or returns back home in accordance with statutory guidance. Consequently, they do not have current information to inform their specific role in each individual child's life. The copy of the local police missing from home protocol, which staff refer to, is out of date and is not followed consistently in practice. Staff only began sharing return from home interview intelligence with the local police after a recent strategy meeting. This information sharing has been a part of the local police missing protocol for some time.

One young person's behaviour has become increasingly unsafe. They disclose to staff information which indicates that they may be involved in sexual exploitation and drug running for gangs. The registered manager has not identified these as safeguarding concerns. She has not shared this information with the local authority safeguarding service. The sharing of this information with the young person's

placing authority is not consistent. This does not demonstrate an understanding of basic safeguarding practice or effective partnership working.

Risk management systems within the home are inadequate. Risk assessments are not routinely reviewed after any incidents of missing in line with the home's own policy. Similarly, children and young people have specific child sexual exploitation 'toolkits' and separate risk assessments. These are not consistently reviewed after any new information or if serious incidents take place to ensure actions to reduce risk remain appropriate. One young person displayed a fascination with fire and showed actual fire setting behaviours (including setting a fire in their bedroom) for at least six weeks prior to a formal risk assessment being undertaken. This is not effective risk management in order to maintain a safe environment for all and to reduce risky behaviours.

The home's 'safeguarding log' contains minimal entries since the previous inspection. Inspectors identified multiple child protection concerns such as allegations, drug use, possible child sexual exploitation, self-harm, suicidal thoughts and fire setting which are not included in the 'safeguarding log'. These matters are documented in a range of records including incident reports, restraint records, missing from care reports and key working sessions. The lack of a central log of safeguarding concerns and disclosures makes it difficult for the registered manager to identify patterns and trends and take appropriate action.

The registered manager has notified Ofsted of two serious events since the previous inspection. Both notifications contain minimal information about actions taken by the registered manager in relation to preventing the event from happening again. Inspectors found nine events which suggest possible child sexual exploitation and Ofsted and the local authority where the children's home is placed were not informed. Inspectors identified a further six other serious incidents which were not notified to Ofsted. The registered manager does not consider the cumulative effect in relation to the frequency of incidents, such as the escalating missing from home reports for one young person, and notification to Ofsted. By failing to appropriately share information with relevant external agencies the registered manager is not demonstrating a commitment to 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance. It also compromises the regulator's ability to effectively review safeguarding arrangements within the home.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
The leadership and management of this home is not safe or effective. The registered manager fails to role model good safeguarding practice to the staff	

team. She fails to prioritise the protection of children and young people and respond appropriately to child welfare concerns. This compromises the safety and well-being of all children and young people placed in the home.

The registered manager has been working within this children's home since June 2014. She became formally registered with Ofsted in January 2015. She has obtained a level 3 childcare qualification. She has relevant experience of working in children's homes for children and young people with emotional and behavioural needs since 2007. She is currently working towards her Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Services, which she commenced in January 2014.

A previous requirement to ensure the statement of purpose is individualised to this children's home has been met. It now contains individualised information about its location and what services the children's home offers to children and young people including therapeutic support. The statement of purpose specifically describes offering care to children and young people who have 'histories of going missing' and 'putting themselves at risk from sexual exploitation or other risk taking behaviours'. However, the registered manager fails to deliver safe care to children and young people who go missing regularly or who show clear signs and indicators of possible child sexual exploitation.

At the previous inspection, internal management monitoring systems were identified as weak. These systems are inadequate. Despite weekly checks and daily monitoring taking place, the registered manager fails to identify safeguarding concerns which are apparent within a wide range of records. She fails to work together effectively with partnership agencies and take appropriate actions to safeguard children and young people.

External monitoring systems have also failed to identify the significant shortfalls as identified during this inspection. Actions raised following these visits generally focus on paperwork matters. When one child shared with the visitor that they found the disruptive behaviour of a peer upsetting, no action point was raised within the report to follow this up. Staff also raised 'concerns' regarding one child with the visitor. Again, no specific action was taken as a result of this feedback. The current external visitor fails to ensure children and young people in the home are safe and listened to.

Records of staff supervision are incomplete. For example, the registered manager's supervision file did not contain any records for 2015. As a result, it is difficult to evaluate the quality of performance management for staff of all grades, including how child-focused these sessions are. The registered manager verbally confirms she receives support from the organisation's area manager and the head of therapy. The lack of formal records means the quality of this guidance and any professional challenge to improve management practice cannot be assessed. Oversight and scrutiny by the responsible individual is also difficult to evaluate as

records do not indicate any formal review by them.

Since the last inspection, additional staff have been used on occasions to raise the number of staff on a shift to three. This has been required when children and young people have been displaying challenging behaviours. However, the presence of this extra staff member has not been consistent. The majority of shifts are staffed by two adults. If a child goes missing, one of these staff members immediately leaves to search for the child. Subsequently, this often leaves one staff member with two children. On these occasions, this negatively affects opportunities for activities for children who are left in the home.

Recruitment and vetting procedures within the home are sound. All the staff team have undertaken child sexual exploitation training in 2013 and an annual refresher in generic safeguarding practice. However, staff at all levels, do not demonstrate recognition of serious child protection concerns including child sexual exploitation. Some specific key working sessions have been completed with children and young people around sexual health following staff undertaking a course called 'let's talk about sex'. Other training courses such as an 'introduction to mental health' and 'health promotion' provide some staff members with continuing professional development and learning.

Following a previous requirement, a senior member of staff has joined the staff team. This provides clearer deputising arrangements for when the registered manager is absent. This includes providing leadership and ensuring essential management tasks continue such as monitoring records. However, this senior member of staff failed to recognise serious safeguarding concerns and report them on appropriately within two incident reports sampled during this inspection.

The registered manager does not have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. A development plan was created in June 2014 and the same goals remain in place currently. This plan lacks challenge and fails to demonstrate learning from listening to children and young people or show actions identified from internal monitoring. Overall, this plan is having no impact on positively improving safe practice within the home or in helping children and young people make progress.

A previous recommendation to include specific information within the children's guide is met. Information is now accessible to children and young people about their own Independent Reviewing Officer and children's rights.

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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