

SC025420

Registered provider: Quality Protects Children Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The home is privately owned and managed.

Inspection dates: 8, 9 and 21 August 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

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.

Date of last inspection: 21 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- Poor recording fails to provide a factual record of who is in the building. This

fails to protect young people from harm.

- The home fails to present a warm, comforting environment for young people, and may possibly be a risk to young people's health and safety.
- Staff duty rosters fail to accurately reflect the actual staff on duty, and lack transparency.
- Care plans and risk assessments are not robust or reviewed effectively to address the changing needs of the young people.
- Staff do not receive supervision in line with the provider's own policies and procedures.
- Staff are not suitably trained, in particular in safeguarding and first aid.
- Changes made to the use of rooms within the home, which include accommodation for staff who were off duty, have not been notified to Ofsted.

The children's home's strengths:

- Young people are cared for by a committed, culturally diverse staff team.
- Young people who previously had been at high risk of exploitation due to gang affiliation are now safer and have significantly reduced the risks they faced formerly.
- Young people have made progress within their education provision.
- Staff work well with other professionals to support young people.
- Young people are well supported to maintain contact with important people in their lives. This enables young people to maintain their identity.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
17/11/2016	Full	Good
16/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
11/08/2015	Full	Good

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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
12. The protection of children standard The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure: that staff have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(iii)(vii)(d))	25/09/2017
13. The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must ensure: that staff are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; that they use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(2)(a)(c)(h)) In particular, ensure that a record is kept of all adults who are on the premises at all times and ensure that all staff have up-to-date safeguarding and first aid training.	25/09/2017
14. The care planning standard	25/09/2017

The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home: In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and to ensure that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14(1)(a)(2)(b)(ii)(c))	
33. Employment of staff The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(b))	25/09/2017
36. Children's case records The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child, which include the information and documents listed in schedule 3 in relation to each child, are kept up to date and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36(1)(a)(b)(c))	25/09/2017
37. Other records The registered person must maintain in the home the records in schedule 4; and ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37(2)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that accurate staff rosters are maintained.	25/09/2017
49. Notice of changes The registered person must give notice in writing to HMCI if the premises of the home are significantly altered. (Regulation 49(g)) In particular, ensure that any changes to the premises, such as altering the former archive room to accommodate staff, are notified to Ofsted in advance.	25/09/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that children have access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.19)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The physical environment of the home is not maintained to a high standard. The home presents as worn in places. For example, at the time of the inspection the stair carpet had numerous lighter burns on the risers. One young person's bedroom was unclean, with clothes strewn across the floor and dirty plates with the remnants of old food left lying on the floor. The mattress and bedding on the young person's bed were engrained with dirt. During the inspection, the manager did take action to rectify this and a new mattress was delivered. A further issue was identified within one of the bedrooms, where bedroom cabinets and wardrobes were in a state of disrepair, with doors and shelves missing. As a result, certain areas of the home present in a less than welcoming manner and do not provide young people with furniture to meet their needs at all times. This is not conducive to a warm, comforting environment for young people and may present a risk to young people's health and safety.

Young people's health and well-being are promoted in the home and their individual health needs are being addressed. Staff spend time talking to young people about their health and general well-being and provide support to attend all appointments, such as dental and optician appointments. One young person said, 'They look after us well; we had people in telling us how to keep safe with sexual health advice.'

Young people who were previously associated with gang affiliation are now safer. Staff have talked to young people about the risks they were placing themselves at, including discussions around appropriate and safe friendship groups. Staff have identified additional support systems that young people can use if they are vulnerable, such as contacting the staff directly while out in the community if they feel they are at risk. This has significantly reduced the risks they formerly faced. A parent commented, 'I know my son is safer living there.'

Young people's identity needs continue to be given a high priority by staff. The home is particularly good at addressing young people's special dietary requirements and cultural needs. Storage of food within the home has been adapted to meet the cultural needs of the young people, specifically a separate fridge for halal food. Young people are also supported by staff to attend their specific places of worship, to ensure their religious preferences are provided for. This means that young people can continue to practise the observance of their own individual cultural and religious norms. A young person commented, 'I often go out to restaurants where I can eat food from my own country and I like that. I also shop for some of my own food.'

Education is well supported. Young people benefit from individual education packages that reflect their learning needs and challenge any barriers they face. When young people do not have suitable school placements, staff work in partnership with specialist education agencies to reduce disruption to young people's learning. Staff work closely with the education provider and the local authority to ensure that young people make meaningful progress with their education.

Young people have been fully supported to develop and maintain family contact and

friendships. The staff have been proactive in their approach and have re-established links with family members. Staff fully understand how important it is for young people to keep in contact with their families. Staff ensure that safe and suitable arrangements are in place for young people who live a distance from their families to maintain contact and sustain important relationships. This allows young people to maintain their sense of belonging within their families.

Risk assessments and key work sessions are in place for young people with regard to e-safety. The home have purchased a home computer for young people to use but this was not readily available for them to access at the time of the inspection. This was because it was locked in a cupboard while awaiting safeguarding restrictions to be installed. Until this is addressed this means that young people do not have the same opportunity as their friends living in the community to access e-learning or social media sites.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The young people say that they feel safe and secure at the home. There have been no complaints and the inspector observed a relaxed and happy household. Staff place the quality of their relationships with young people at the heart of their practice. They are skilled in observing and understanding the needs and vulnerabilities of the young people. The routines and structures in place support young people in feeling safe and comfortable in their surroundings.

However, some practices within the home have the potential to place young people at risk. In particular, a staff member was given permission by the responsible individual to utilise the top floor of the home, which was previously used as an archive space, as a living space for when they had completed shifts at this and other homes of the provider. This arrangement was not risk-assessed. Furthermore, the member of staff was not recorded as being in the building.

The young people do not have comprehensive placement plans that clearly show how their assessed needs should be met. Although each placement plan consists of an 'all of me' contribution by young people about their likes and dislikes, the plans do not direct staff on how to best to understand young people's needs and how they should go about supporting young people in order to meet those needs. There has been a lack of management oversight to ensure that these plans are good enough to help make a positive difference to young people's lives.

Care planning documents for young people have recently been changed by senior managers within the organisation. This change has led to confusion for staff, and the documents do not outline effectively how the needs identified in the local authority care plan will be met. For example, in one young person's placement plan the information was limited. It stated that the young person did not want contact with parents. However, the local authority care plan stated that there were no restrictions in contact with family members.

Furthermore, other existing documentation was duplicated, meaning it was unclear to staff which specific plan they were to be following. For example, four versions of one

young person's behaviour management plan were in use within the home. None of these documents was dated. This means that the manager cannot be assured that all staff are fully aware of the individual needs of young people, that staff are following the most recent and up to date version and that young people are fully able to understand their plan.

Despite the shortfalls in the documentation relating to behaviour management, sanctions are fair and proportionate. Positive behaviour is recognised and rewarded appropriately. The staff discuss the sanction imposed on a young person, and the young person has the opportunity to comment and sign. This helps young people to gain an understanding of any consequences.

Young people who have previously persistently gone missing have greatly reduced such incidents as they settle in the home. Staff follow good procedures when young people go missing, and liaise with external professionals to ensure their safety. The staff implement the home's comprehensive missing from care protocol. There has been a reduction in the number of missing from home incidents because staff engage young people in meaningful activities. The staff liaise with parents and social workers and are proactive in requesting return home interviews. A professional responsible for return home interviews commented, 'Staff are proactive in trying to keep in touch with young people when they are missing.'

Staff duty rosters fail to accurately reflect the actual staff on duty and lack transparency. This prevents a clear audit trail of who is working within the setting, when and where. For example, some rosters had been overwritten and did not give a clear indication of who was on duty. This fails to demonstrate that the provider clearly understands their roles and responsibilities in protecting young people. Furthermore, the lack of transparency of who is on duty potentially places young people at risk and compromises the continuity of care.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

This inspection was completed over the following dates; 8, 9 and 21 August 2017. New information received by Ofsted meant the inspection was extended to a third day in order to gather additional information to complete the inspection so that reliable judgements could be finalised.

The home is managed by a suitably experienced and qualified manager who has a level four qualification in leadership and management. He knows the young people extremely well and supports his staff in their roles. Staff comments included that they found the manager to be 'very supportive' and a 'good manager'.

Although staff spoken to during the inspection said that they felt appropriately supported, the inspection identified that formal supervision has not taken place at regular intervals for both permanent and new staff. This does not provide sufficient opportunities to review whether, or how, staff are contributing to young people achieving improved outcomes.

The registered manager failed to challenge a decision by the responsible individual to allow the archive room in the home to be utilised as living space for off-duty staff. Furthermore, he failed to inform HMCI of this change in use of the room. This could

potentially place young people at risk due to the lack of risk assessments for this arrangement.

Care planning is poor and does not promote the continued progress of the young people. Internal placement plans and risk management plans are not reviewed effectively to identify the changing needs of the young person. They also fail to address the issues of risk and how these should be managed safely, to promote consistency of care. Records do not provide an adequate insight into the young people's lives. There is limited information to measure their progress or identify the effectiveness of the support being provided.

There are shortfalls in staff skills, training and development. This includes a lack of refresher training in important areas, notably safeguarding and first aid training. This fails to ensure that all staff have the skills required for their role and does not enable them to provide a safe environment for young people to live in.

Although some areas of leadership and management need further development, there are several examples of good, effective practice. The registered manager builds positive relationships with external professionals and successfully engages them when the circumstances of a young person require urgent intervention. This has resulted in timely meetings being convened in response to young people placing themselves at risk. A number of professionals commented on the effective partnership working. A social worker commented, 'They work well with fellow professionals to safeguard children.'

The staff are proud of the progress young people have made since moving into the home. They demonstrate a commitment to making further improvement in the lives of the young people who live in the home. They take pride in the young people's achievements and celebrate difference.

The home has appropriate systems in place to notify Ofsted and other relevant bodies of significant events that occur within the home or with young people. This ensures that those with an interest in young people's welfare are kept appropriately informed.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC025420

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Quality Protects Children Limited

Registered provider address: Quality Protects Children Ltd, Hill House, Archway Road, Huyton, Liverpool L36 9XB

Responsible individual: Anthony Nolan

Registered manager: Anthony Tagoe

Inspectors

Elaine Allison, social care inspector
Michelle Edge, social care manager

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