

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	03/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC028599
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Children and Family Services Limited
Registered person address	Prospero House, 46-48 Rothesay Road, LUTON, LU1 1QZ

Responsible individual	Ruth Kirchner
Registered manager	Ruth Kirchner
Inspector	Jane Partridge

Inspection date	03/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
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

SC028599

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- Young people are not sufficiently safeguarded from going missing from care.
- Young people who have been missing from care have not received an independent interview on their return.
- Whilst young people have risk assessments in place, these do not consider the risks over both houses and staff have not signed to evidence their awareness of the presenting risks.
- The recording and quality of paperwork is weak.
- Staff have not received regular practice-related supervision nor have they had their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year.

The children's home strengths

- All young people make notable progress whilst living at this home.
- All young people achieve a high level of attendance at school and make educational progress.
- All young people are healthy as the staff meet their complex health needs and offer a healthy lifestyle.
- All young people access a range of community based activities, which enhance their social experience and develop their social skills.
- Staff support and promote the differing cultural needs of young people in placement.
- Young people experience good transition into the home and planned and appropriate endings.
- Creative use of social stories in accessible formats helps young people to understand situations, gain social learning and independence skills.
- Managers and staff establish and maintain good working relationships with parents and promote family contact.
- Managers and staff establish and maintain effective working relationships with the wider professional team around the young person.
- The manager is particularly effective in challenging specific plans for young people, ensuring they achieve good outcomes.

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 respect of managing risk, 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.	04/02/2016
13: The leadership and management standard. In order to meet this standard, in respect of staff training, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2) (c) have the skills to meet the needs of each child, in particular undertaking training to gain specific knowledge to meet the individual needs of some young people in placement. Specifically, attachment, the impact of abuse and neglect and ADHD training.	04/02/2016
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation (33) (4) (b) (c))	04/02/2016
In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation (45) (2) (a))	04/02/2016

Recommendations

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

Ensure that when a child who has been missing from care has been found, that they must be offered an independent return interview. The interview should be carried out with 72 hours of the child returning to their care home.

(Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care
2014, page 14 paragraphs 31 and 32)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home, which provides residential care for up to seven young people with learning difficulties and who may also have a physical disability. It operates across two adjacent houses.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/02/2015	Full	Good
24/02/2014	Interim	Satisfactory progress
21/01/2014	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
The young people in this home benefit from good quality care. However, some aspects of promoting safety, and leadership and management, have resulted in shortfalls that impact on young people. This is reflected in the overall judgement of requires improvement. The home operates across two adjacent houses, each of which presents in very good decorative order and offers young people a warm and comfortable living space. Young people have personalised bedrooms, which reflect their likes and interests. Staff provide a stable and consistently nurturing environment where all young people make notable progress. This is widely recognised by families and the professional team alike. One parent noted: 'I can see the real positive changes he has made and he is happy.' A professional notes: 'Since he has been there he has just flourished.' Without exception, each young person placed has made progress and developed their skills and abilities. Young people experience very good transition into the home. The engaging children's guide is a visual aid, which helps young people become familiar with their surroundings. Staff also take time to develop a relationship over the introduction and settling in period to smooth the transition and lessen any anxiety the young person may experience. Some young people were able to report good relationships with staff members. For other young people, observed interaction demonstrated a close, comfortable relationship. Parents and professionals also confirmed this. As such, young people are benefiting from trusting relationships with adults that care about their welfare and who want to do their best by them. Young people have a range of additional needs and staff use a variety of communication methods to positively engage and communicate with them. Staff are skilled at interpreting gestures and behaviour to ensure young people's expressed views are heard. Staff creatively develop individually accessible social stories, which help young people understand situations, gain social learning and independence skills. All young people are in education and achieve a high level of attendance. Staff work particularly closely with the school, meeting regularly to discuss the individual needs of young people. These meetings provide space to review progress and to ensure that young people receive a consistent approach across both establishments. This has resulted in good educational outcomes for young people,	

where they have achieved and grown in their abilities, social skills and independence.

Staff proactively ensure that young people have excellent opportunities to engage in a range of recreational activities both at home and within the wider community. Young people enjoy such activities as youth clubs, swimming, play days and country walks. These offer fun opportunities where young people meet the challenges of new tasks and develop their skills.

The staff team meet young people's health needs. Many young people take regular prescribed medication for specific medical conditions. Staff have trained in the administration of medicine and first aid; this ensures that young people receive appropriate attention if an accident occurs. However, the general health of young people improves because staff offer healthy choices. Positive changes, such as healthy weight loss and an increase in mobility has contributed to improved confidence in young people. One professional said: 'He just glows now!'

Promoting and supporting equality and diversity are central to the daily practice of the home. Young people placed come from a range of diverse backgrounds and staff work proactively to meet individual needs. Some of the young people follow a halal diet and others take part in making Caribbean food. Staff support young people to choose their own style of clothing, the activities they wish to engage in and they support young people to put their individual stamp on their personal space. This helps young people to develop a positive sense of self and raises self-esteem.

The manager and staff value the young person's family; they establish and maintain good working relationships with parents. Staff support family contact in line with the care plans, which maintains family relationships and supports identity.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
One young person in placement has a history of going missing and their levels of vulnerability significantly increase because of their learning and communication difficulties. Although this information was available prior to placement, a missing episode occurred, which placed the young person at significant risk. To prevent a further incident a risk assessment highlighted the need to change the security system at the front of the property. This however, did not offer further safeguarding as a second incident of missing occurred. A similar security system at the rear of the building was not considered in the revised risk assessment. As such, the young person was put at significant risk for a second time. The recording of these incidents was particularly weak. It lacked substance and omitted information.	

The records offered little information to evaluate the risk factors and inform strategies to be used.

This home operates across two adjacent houses and whilst young people reside in a particular house they all engage in activities in both houses. The risk assessments, including the missing from home risk assessment, are not considered in relation to each property. This does not enable robust risk management in order to safeguard young people. Some risk assessments are not robust; staff have not consistently confirmed their knowledge of risk assessments and placement plans by signing documentation once they have read it. The lack of robustness and inconsistent approach does not ensure young people's welfare is safeguarded.

When missing young people return, they do not experience an independent return home interview. This compromises opportunities to uncover information that can help protect young people from the risk of going missing again or the risk they may have been exposed to whilst missing.

Some young people have particularly benefited from the homes no physical intervention policy. Prior to placement some young people had experienced frequent physical interventions as the usual method to manage behaviour. Staff work with young people to establish routines and boundaries, which offer a consistent and predictable home environment. Staff use de-escalation techniques to diffuse potentially harmful behaviour, this helps young people recognise and begin to manage their own emotions.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the action they would take should they become concerned about a young person's safety. The manager also has good links with the local authority designated officer, which contributes to young people's safety.

Staff are carefully selected and checked to ensure only suitable adults are employed to care for young people.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The manager is appropriately qualified and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the home. She has worked within a social care setting for over 25 years and has held a management role within the home since it opened in 2000. The staff team are committed to delivering a good quality service to young people. They are proud of the positive changes they see in young people and their part in	

these achievements; such as working with young people to manage their emotions, or by providing opportunities for young people to become increasingly mobile and access social opportunities. They report a solid working relationship. Staff work collaboratively over the two houses to ensure young people receive a consistent and shared approach. This offers the young people a predictable home environment in which trusting relationships are able to form.

The manager has recently developed an induction programme which ensures new staff undertake essential learning. Ongoing training throughout their probationary period provides staff with the skills and understanding to care for young people with disabilities. However, the home provides care for young people with highly complex needs as they may also have experienced issues such as periods of poor parenting or traumatic events such as significant loss. Staff do not currently access training to expand their knowledge and understanding to meet the individualised needs of the young people in placement.

The home operates a supervision process in which staff have space to focus on child centred practice, raise issues for discussion, debrief about experiences, receive feedback and consider personal development. However, most staff have not had supervision in line with the home's policy. Further to this, no staff have had their performance and fitness appraised annually. This lack of supervision and appraisal means young people's experiences, needs and plans are not effectively considered. It does not offer an environment where staff development is considered as part of the overall delivery of the service.

There is a shortfall in the quality of the paperwork. Staff and the manager have not consistently signed documents, mistakes appear in the recording, which is not comprehensive and there is inconsistent recording of staff training. Whilst this may not have a direct impact on the care provided to young people, it does not demonstrate a robustness in the monitoring of the quality of care the service aims to deliver.

A significant strength of the staff group is their effective working relationships with professional colleagues. The wider professional team recognise and highly praise the contributions that the manager and staff team have made to the significantly improved outcomes for the young people. The manager is particularly effective in challenging plans for young people where she is concerned that decisions are not in their best interests. The results have been very positive for young people and their families. These include a young person returning to their family home and another being able to return home for festive celebrations.

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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