

SC035339

Registered provider: Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides care and accommodation for up to seven young people who may experience emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is currently being run by an interim unregistered manager in the absence of the registered manager.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 January 2020

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **inadequate**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and widespread failures that mean young people are not suitably protected. The care and experiences of children and young people are poor, and they are not making suitable progress.

Date of last inspection: 17 July 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

The home was issued with two compliance notices under regulation 12 (the protection of children standard) and 13 (the leadership and management standard) in July 2019. A monitoring visit was undertaken in August 2019 to assess the progress made in addressing the steps outlined in the compliance notices. This visit judged the notices as not met.

A second monitoring visit was undertaken on 20 October 2019 to assess the progress made in addressing the steps outlined in the compliance notices. This visit concluded that the notices remained unmet.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/07/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
21/11/2018	Full	Good
05/10/2017	Full	Good
20/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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
7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	10/02/2020
8: The education standard The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—	10/02/2020

that staff— help each child to achieve the child’s education and training targets, as recorded in the child’s relevant plans; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers. (Regulation 8 (1)(2)(a)(i)(iii))	
11: The positive relationships standard The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans; understand how children’s previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and have the skills to recognise incidents of bullying and how to deal with them; and that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i)(ix)(xi)(xii)(xiii)(b))	10/02/2020
*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—	10/02/2020

that staff— 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; that the home’s day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(iv)(b))	
*13: The leadership and management standard The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that— helps children to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care for each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child	10/02/2020

and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h))	
*14: The care planning standard The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— ensure the effective induction of each child into the home; manage and review the placement of each child in the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(i)(ii))	10/02/2020
44: Independent person: visits and reports The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. (Regulation 44 (1))	10/02/2020
45: Review of quality of care The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children at least once every six months. 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; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (1)(2)(a)(b)(c))	10/02/2020
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—	10/02/2020

seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (a)(c)(d))	
6: The quality and purpose of care standard The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use that understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; protect and promote each child's welfare; that the care meets the child's needs; that the care is delivered by a person who— has the experience, knowledge and skills to deliver care. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(I)(ii)(3)(b)(c)(I))	10/02/2020
16: Statement of purpose The registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (5))	10/02/2020
22: Contact and access to communications If the registered person considers it to be necessary for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the welfare of a child, the	10/02/2020

registered person may impose conditions, prohibitions or restrictions upon a child's— contact with parents, friends or relatives; access to communications under paragraph (3) of this regulation. (Regulation 22 (5)(a)(b))	
31: Staffing of children's homes The registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children's home does not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. (Regulation 31 (1))	10/02/2020

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

The children's home was closed for a period of three months in order to undergo a complete refurbishment and to address the shortfalls in practice as identified at the interim inspection in July 2019 and subsequent monitoring visits. The home reopened on 28 October 2019.

Two young people requiring one-to-one support moved into the home on the day it opened. One young person was moved to another residential placement after a short period of time as staff were unable to keep them safe. Another young person moved in. Two young people remained in placement at the time of this inspection.

The admission process for young people coming to live at the home is deficient. Contrary to the procedures in place, the interim residential manager is not consistently involved in the placement matching process. Moreover, where requests for placements have been assessed as unsuitable, the interim manager's decision has been overruled, and the placement has been made. Consequently, young people's needs are not assessed against those who are already living in the home or the number of permanent staff available to care for them.

Care planning is poor. Essential documents required to plan for the care and education of each young person are not always completed or made available at the point of admission. Likewise, plans are not regularly updated to ensure that only the most relevant information is available for staff. For example, documents included conflicting instructions for staff relating to restrictions on contact and the responsibilities for staff when a young person is missing from care. The inconsistent management and

monitoring of young people's care serve to compromise the stability of each young person's placement.

Young people are not cared for by a consistent and permanent staff team. There is an over-reliance on the use of agency staff who are employed in the home on a daily basis. This means that staffing is inconsistent, and at times is inappropriate to meet the needs of the young people living in the home. Consequently, young people struggle to form relationships with staff. One young person said, 'I don't see this as a home. There are different people every day. I don't know who they are. I struggle to form relationships and I can't manage change, and they placed me here. I stay in my room most of the time.' The interim manager said, 'We don't have the staff to meet the needs of the young people living here.'

Education arrangements for young people are in place. One young person is supported to maintain her attendance at her previous school and is reported to make good progress when she attends. Another young person receives 15 hours of private tuition per week. However, arrangements to ensure the consistency of a named tutor have taken some time to put into place. Likewise, transition planning to return to mainstream education and plans for work experience, as identified in the young person's placement plan, are not in place. This is because personal education plans are not up to date or incomplete. A young person said, 'I was really looking forward to starting my placement, but it was stopped. I don't know when it is happening now.' The education tutor said, 'Staff really need to embrace the young person's optimism for wanting to try new things.'

Arrangements for family contact are deficient. Information provided on young people's initial pen pictures, placement plans, risk assessments and daily logs about contact restrictions and the frequency of contact is conflicting. The interim manager said, 'Arrangements change all the time. We are not kept up to date. Sometimes decisions are taken by the social worker or the police that we disagree with, but our hands are tied.' As a result, some young people have overnight contact where there are known risks. This lack of collaborative working between agencies results in young people spending more time away from the children's home in situations where risks are unmanaged.

Arrangements for the management and monitoring of young people who self-harm are inadequate. Young people placed in this home have a history of poor emotional well-being. This impacts significantly on their self-esteem and confidence, and their ability to form trusting relationships. Since their admission to the home, incidents of self-harm have increased and include threats to end their lives. Consequently, young people are monitored by agency night waking staff throughout the night. However, the frequency of such monitoring is unclear and ranges between half-hourly to two-hourly. Furthermore, it is unclear what the night waking staff are monitoring. This inconsistent approach to managing the significant complexities of young people compromises their overall safety and well-being.

Young people are registered with local healthcare professionals. They receive consistent support from external healthcare support teams including the child and adolescent

mental health team and counsellors. Young people engage well and value their time with these services.

Sporadic consultation takes place with young people on an individual and group basis. They are encouraged to devise the home's menu and weekly activities. Some records detail young people's concerns about matters such as bullying, being unhappy in the placement and contact. However, details about how these matters are addressed are not recorded. A young person said, 'Nobody wants to talk to strangers. They don't care about us and they can't do anything to change anything. They just write it down and that is that.' Consequently, because of the persistent change in staff, young people do not feel that their wishes and feelings are valued and respected.

Young people are provided with a weekly activity allowance and are encouraged to join in activities. One young person is beginning to try out new activities while the other enjoys using their allowance to purchase additional beauty products. A young person said, 'Going on an activity depends who is on shift. Sometimes it is alright, but I won't go if I don't know them.'

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Risk management is poor. Although individual risk assessments are completed and include suitable information about how risks are to be monitored and managed, they are not routinely followed by staff. For example, staff do not search for a young person if they are missing. The interim manager said, 'Staff have been reluctant to go out and search for young people. This is something I have been trying to change.' Likewise, risk assessments are not routinely updated to ensure that changes to pertinent information are up to date. As a result, young people's safety and well-being are compromised by ineffective and inconsistent risk management.

Young people have access to personal mobile phones and are financially supported to ensure that they have call time and mobile data. Individual risk assessments are completed in order to safeguard young people with regard to child or criminal exploitation. Risk assessments clearly state that mobile phones must be handed in at bedtime. However, records of waking night observations highlight that young people are using their mobile phones throughout the night. The interim manager said, 'It is my understanding that the local authority does not allow for phones to be removed.' This lack of management monitoring and action to address this matter as a safeguarding concern increases young people's risk of exploitation.

Young people are regularly missing from the children's home. Consequently, since the home reopened on 28 October 2019, there have been 29 police call-outs to the home. Individual risk assessments detail the steps to be taken in the event of a young person being missing, such as following them, searching the local area and visiting known addresses and areas the young person frequents. However, these steps are not consistently implemented by staff. Likewise, individual keywork sessions do not take place in order to help young people reduce their risk-taking behaviours. Consequently,

risks are not robustly managed, resulting in young people's safety and well-being being compromised.

Young people are allowed a set amount of free time. However, staff are not aware of where the young people are going or who with, in order to carry out spot checks as detailed in their individual risk assessments. Therefore, young people are not sighted by staff for a number of hours and frequently fail to return home. The interim manager said, 'We have not had the staff to go out looking for young people and it is something the staff have not been used to. I am trying to change the culture of the home.' The failure to ensure suitable staffing arrangements, including the experience and skills of staff working in the home, clearly results in the significant failure to safeguard the young people living there.

Some young people experience bullying in the home. Staff do not have the experience or skill in order to manage and address bullying behaviours effectively. This resulted in one young person being systematically intimidated. The young person said, 'It was awful. I didn't know what I had done. It started as soon as I arrived. Staff couldn't do anything. I couldn't come out of my room because it wasn't safe.' This is a direct result of the management failure to appropriately impact risk-assess and match young people who are referred for accommodation in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The new interim manager commenced her employment on the day the home opened. Contrary to the assurances given by management at the monitoring inspection in October 2019, the home reopened without sufficient staffing. The home is operating with three full-time staff and two part-time staff. There is a significant over-reliance on agency staff.

The quality of agency staff employed in the home is inconsistent. The interim manager said, 'Some agency staff cannot speak English, some do not know how to engage with the young people and on occasions I have needed to send them home.' In addition, different agency staff are sent to the home on a regular basis. This impacts significantly on the running of the home and the consistency of care provided to young people. The failure to ensure sufficient experienced and knowledgeable staff serves to impact negatively on young people who require security and consistency.

Regulation 45 internal monitoring reports are not completed in accordance with regulation and timescales. Therefore, a bi-annual review of the home's overall developments and challenges is not routinely undertaken by the regulatory body.

The external monitoring arrangements for the home are deficient. Reports are not written consistently and therefore do not provide the interim manager with an independent overview of the care provided in the home.

Staff are now receiving supervision from the interim manager. However, steps taken to address poor performance, including the failure to follow instructions, have no positive impact on how the home is run.

The interim manager has failed to lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the home's statement of purpose. The failure to suitably address the concerns as identified in this report serves to exacerbate the cycle of risk. Therefore, outcomes for young people are compromised.

Staff were not provided with specific training prior to the home reopening. This means that staff do not have opportunities to review and address the previous shortfalls in practice in line with up-to-date training. However, it is acknowledged that the interim manager has now booked all staff on training to commence mid-January and February 2020.

The refurbishment of the home is complete. The home is decorated to a good standard and any damage to the home is rectified quickly.

The shortfalls highlighted demonstrate poor leadership and management practice and a lack of ability to take effective action to improve the quality of care in the home. This has compromised the safety, experience and progress of the young people accommodated in the home. As a result, a number of requirements are made to secure improved practice.

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: SC035339

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, West Street, Oldham OL1 1UT

Responsible individual: Post vacant

Registered manager: Dianne Chesters

Inspector

Maria McGranaghan, social care inspector

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