

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	14 March 2016
Unique reference number	SC037762
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Portsmouth City Council
Registered person address	Portsmouth City Council, Civic Offices, Guildhall Square, Portsmouth PO1 2BG

Responsible individual	Sarah Newman
Registered manager	Calvin George
Inspector	Kevin Whatley

Inspection date	14 March 2016
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

SC037762

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Children and young people are regularly involved in criminal-type behaviours both in the home and local community.
- Young people are routinely misusing illegal substances and refuse to engage in programmes to help them reduce or stop.
- Young people have recently disengaged from staff support and guidance and treat them and each other with disrespect, and on occasion bullying has occurred.
- Young people have assaulted staff and each other and their behaviour is unacceptable. Behaviour during the inspection was extremely poor.
- Young people do not regularly engage in education, training or employment. The current level of attendance is virtually nil.
- The current group of young people is poorly matched. Group dynamics are difficult with young people engaging in similar anti-social and illegal-type behaviours.
- Liaison between the home and the local police lacks cohesion. This results in inconsistent practice and uncertainty among staff, regarding when to contact the police for assistance.
- Staff do not consistently follow agreed behaviour-management strategies.

The children's home strengths

- Staff remain committed to meeting the challenging and complex needs of young people, notably during recent periods of disruptive behaviour that have included assaults against them.
- Staff understand the emotional needs of young people and appreciate that their inappropriate behaviours often hide what is really going on for them.
- Staff have good insight into the young people in their care and continually attempt to build meaningful relationships with them.
- The city council acknowledges the problems that the home has experienced in recent weeks and displays a commitment to putting things right.
- The implementation of immediate action plans evidences the seriousness with which the city council has responded appropriately to the current situation.
- The registered manager is highly experienced and leads by example in setting appropriate expectations of practice. He is determined to settle the home, support staff and stabilise the atmosphere, and he remains positive for the future.

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 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 must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, with particular reference to maintaining a suitable living environment, the registered person must: 2(c) ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to- (i) Meet the needs of each young person; in particular ensure that repairs are completed without delay, notably fire door closures	09/05/2016
8: The education standard In order to meet the education standards, with particular reference to engaging young people in their education, training or employment, the registered person must: 2(a)(x) help each young person to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations within the young person's relevant plans; in particular seek ways to increase their levels of attendance and engagement	09/05/2016
11: The positive relationships standard In order to meet the positive relationship standards, with particular reference to helping young people to behave well, staff must: 2(xi) de-escalate confrontations with or between young people, or potentially violent behaviour by young people; in particular those behaviours that place other young people and staff at the home at risk of harm	09/05/2016

12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standards, with particular reference to helping young people to behave well, the registered person must: (2)(b) ensure the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each young person safe and protect them effectively from the risk of harm; in particular that young people are protected from the risk of being bullied	09/05/2016
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standards, with particular reference to helping young people to behave well, the registered person must: (2)(a) enable, inspire and lead a culture in relation to the children's home that delivers the outcomes, set out in the homes statement of purpose; in particular that there is a clear protocol between the home and police with agreed strategies to respond and reduce the level of criminal type behaviours	09/05/2016
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standards, with particular reference to helping young people to address their use of illegal substances, the registered person must: (1)(b) enable, inspire and lead a culture in relation to a children's home that promotes young people's welfare; in particular ensure that the prevalence of young people misusing illegal substances is addressed	09/05/2016
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must: (2)(a)(b) enable, inspire and lead a culture in relation to the children's home that delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; in particular that staff work as a team and provide consistency in managing the behaviour of young people	09/05/2016
14: The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standards, the registered	09/05/2016

person must: (2)(a) ensure that young people are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of young people for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; in particular ensure the needs of young people are assessed so that they are appropriately matched to live together as a group	
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Recommendations

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

- The registered person should support staff to be ambitious for every young person in the home and to gain skills and experience that enable them actively to support each young person to achieve their potential; in particular the staff team would benefit from additional supervision and training to reflect on and learn from the challenges of recent weeks ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52 paragraph 10.5).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a purpose-built children's home that operates as a reception and assessment centre and is run by the local authority. The home is registered to accommodate seven children and young people, irrespective of gender, between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
3 November 2015	CH - Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25 March 2015	CH - Interim	Sustained effectiveness
3 December 2014	CH - Full	Good
14 January 2014	CH - Interim	Satisfactory progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	requires improvement
The quality of relationships between children and young people and staff is varied. Some young people have built positive relationships with the adults who care for them and have used these well to make progress. As a result, they have made good progress, notably given their poor starting points. These young people have been able to accept staff support and guidance, which in turn have helped them to make successful moves into semi-independent living. Staff continue to provide help via an outreach programme that is providing practical and emotional support and guidance. This approach is clearly improving the chances of young people making positive transitions into adulthood. However, other young people who previously shared meaningful relationships with staff have found it increasingly difficult to maintain their engagement. As a result, their progress has stalled and in some cases deteriorated to a point where they can no longer remain at the home. The home is currently very unsettled, with young people disengaged from staff support. Some young people who had moved on as part of their transition to semi-independent living have returned after external partners could not facilitate their move to supported accommodation. These young people are showing their frustration in negative ways. A culture has developed in which young people routinely take illegal substances. In addition, they are regularly involved in offending-type behaviours in the home and community. In recent weeks, young people have, on occasion, merged together to engage in particularly aggressive and destructive behaviours. Although staff work hard to build meaningful relationships with young people, this has had limited impact on reducing the young people's negative attitudes and behaviour. During the inspection, it was extremely difficult to capture the opinions of young people. Their behaviour was particularly challenging and included inviting staff outside to 'fight'. Staff showed considerable resolve during such altercations and attempted to enforce appropriate boundaries in particularly trying circumstances. Staff are calm and measured in their response and show considerable insight into the emotional needs of young people, irrespective of their current negative behaviours. Young people often arrive at the home presenting with a range of complex emotional and psychological issues. The availability of psychological support assists staff to consider a more holistic approach to promoting the emotional well-being of young people. Staff meet regularly as a team to review strategies, with clinical overview provided by the community adolescent mental health service. Care	

planning reflects this approach with clear aims and objectives in place. This approach has helped a number of young people to find better ways to manage their frustrations, for example by significantly reducing their self-harmful behaviours and substance misuse. Their progress was such that they were in a better physical and emotional position to make positive moves into adult settings. However, as noted, the current cohort of young people are not engaging in their plans and do not respond to the support on offer. These young people are involved in substance misuse and, despite staff attempts, have yet to accept help to address their problems.

The home promotes the importance of learning. However, attendance levels in education vary and at present are very low. The attendance rates of some young people to school or college rose considerably after placement here. Staff liaise well with providers of education, which means that appropriate programmes are in place. Despite the home going to considerable lengths to identify suitable education placements, the last few weeks have seen a dramatic decrease in attendance by all young people. Some young people only managed to attend for one day before they became involved in an altercation with other pupils leading to their exclusion.

A good level of support is available to assist young people with their health care needs, although their current engagement in staying healthy is very low. All young people are registered at the local GP surgery. Medicines are stored safely, and staff are trained in first aid and the administration of medication. Suitable links are in place with the looked after children nursing team. Wherever possible, staff promote healthy lifestyles through diet and through encouraging young people to participate in physical activities. Some young people were keen to keep fit, and attended the gym and played football. Staff continue to offer activities but most young people refuse to engage.

The home ensures that young people maintain contact with families and others of importance to them. This approach ensures that young people can continue to build and maintain positive contact with significant people in their lives. Young people are able to make and receive calls in private.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
Appropriate systems are in place to help protect and promote young people's welfare and safety. However, in recent weeks the impact of staff intervention to keep young people safe from their own actions has had limited impact. While this remains the case, young people are at an increased risk of harm.	

Safeguarding procedures take account of local and national protocols and these run throughout all aspects of care practice. Suitable links with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and local authority designated officer ensure that clear lines of responsibility are in place. No child protection concerns have been reported since the last inspection. Due to current negative behaviours, members of the city council's safeguarding team were involved in urgent strategy meetings aimed at addressing the high levels of concerning behaviours. This approach ensures that all parties are involved in seeking a cohesive strategy to reduce the risks that young people are to themselves or to others. As this meeting only took place a short while ago, it is too early to assess the impact of the agreed plans.

Staff are trained in safeguarding and have an appropriate understanding about their roles and responsibilities. For example, they know when to report issues if young people have disclosed concerning information.

Although not commonplace, bullying behaviour has occurred in recent weeks. This has taken place during periods of increased tension amongst the young person group. When there have been problems between young people, staff address the tensions at the time and ensure that incidents of bullying or aggression are addressed swiftly. Nevertheless, one young person felt that they could not remain at the home while the current issues exist. Staff continue to support this young person through an outreach programme with the aim that they will return once the home has settled.

Young people receive appropriate support to address their problematic or negative behaviour. However, despite the obvious efforts of staff, the impact of intervention strategies is limited. Care practice is supported by risk assessments that are formulated at the point of admission and reviewed regularly thereafter. This has assisted staff to support some young people to make considerable progress, since moving in, in particular in reducing the times they run away from care. Social workers say that staff, 'do all they can...and bend over backwards to help young people'. Despite this, some young people who arrived with entrenched histories of misusing illegal substances and involvement in crime have continued to do so. This has led to their arrest with charges brought against them for a number of offences including possession of cannabis, assault on staff and the taking of cars from the local area.

The home is experiencing a period when young people routinely leave the home without permission. Most of these young people are aged over 17. Missing-from-home policies and protocols are in place. These clearly outline what action staff should take in the event of a young person going missing, including the expectation to maintain contact via the young person's mobile phone. Staff follow these and involve police when necessary. One young person who was an unaccompanied asylum seeker left the home over a month ago and has not

returned. This matter was reported to the police and authorities appropriately. This young person has now turned 18.

The rules of the home are fair and proportionate. These have included the use of incentives, such as the purchasing of music, which helped some young people to reduce their negative behaviours and focus on completing their independent skills programmes. The current group of young people refuses to accept the rules of the home, with sanctions having little effect on encouraging them to respond to staff boundaries. For example, during the inspection young people were seemingly smoking illegal substances in the car park of the home. Staff challenged such use but were ignored and met with hostility and threats. The police were subsequently called, but the young people had left the area when they arrived.

For the most part, staff were consistent in challenging the inappropriate behaviours of young people. However, some inconsistencies were observed, for instance, when young people brought a friend to the home who had previously been banned, staff asked them to stay outside the home's boundary. However, other staff did not challenge the same young person from hanging around directly outside the front door. Such inconsistencies, which at first may appear slight, give young people mixed messages as to the expectations placed on them.

Physical intervention is only used to manage behaviour when young people put themselves or others at serious risk. The level of restraint is extremely low. All staff are trained in behaviour management and the use of restraint. Staff are clear about their responsibilities in the application of restraint and only use this as a last resort.

On occasion, the police have been called to the home by staff to assist in managing volatile behaviour, such as violence. Most police involvement is appropriate. The home has good links with the local police officer for the area, but this has not led to a comprehensive strategy being introduced to address the ongoing issues at the home. A meeting between the head of residential services for the city council and the chief constable for the city has been arranged, to review the situation. It is hoped that this will lead to clearer plans on how to tackle the problems as part of a cohesive approach.

Young people generally live in a safe environment. However, their destructive behaviours are causing damage which is posing an increased risk of harm. A particular example is the damaging of the self-closing mechanisms to bedroom doors which means that they are not closing fully. Young people are also damaging other door locks and frames, which results in cracked and loose frames. The home is working through the recommendations made as a result of its annual fire safety audit, with ongoing maintenance ensuring that any risks caused by the damage is minimised.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
The registered manager displays good leadership and is honest in acknowledging that shortfalls need to improve. He has taken actions to bring about change, such as facilitating urgent strategy meetings with social workers, and ending the placements of certain young people. In addition, the registered manager is receiving the full support of the heads of service from the city council, to resolve the current difficulties. In particular, there has been a decision not to admit any more young people until such time as the home settles, and all young people are safe. The registered manager is a qualified social worker with a vast level of experience. He is focused on providing older young people with a stepping stone into adulthood and supporting their transitions out of care. The registered manager is also the manager for the council's other children's home that provides similar care to a younger age group. Feedback from social workers praised his efforts and in particular the commitment to working with young people with complex behavioural needs. The registered manager and his staff team are mindful of the challenges presented by the young person group. They also accept that the home has experienced a number of difficulties within the dynamics of young people, in recent weeks, which have resulted in an unsettled atmosphere. Some of these are the result of external factors that the home cannot influence, such as transition plans not coming to fruition as agreed. A member of staff said, 'This is the toughest it has been in years...we remain focused on engaging young people irrespective of what they call us...things will improve.' A majority of the requirements made at the last inspection has been met. This includes an updated statement of purpose that clarifies the services provided to young people seeking asylum. The home has now established links to have documents translated into different languages. Young people who require interpreters, such as for meetings with solicitors, now have these provided easily. The number of young people living at the home who are seeking asylum has significantly reduced. Staff have all attended training in working with young asylum seekers and talk with confidence about the improvements that this has brought about in the learning and practice. Some requirements are partially met, in particular the need to maintain the environment in a good condition, with recent damage leaving the home looking tired and worn. There have also been several situations when police were called to the home to deal with serious incidents, such as assaults on staff. These events were not notified to Ofsted.	

Suitable monitoring processes are in place which ensure that standards of care are routinely assessed. The registered manager completes monthly reviews, and his reports provide a retrospective assessment of the home and the progress of each young person. The reports help the management team to confirm the strengths of service provision and to evaluate areas where more emphasis may be required to improve outcomes. Independent visitor reports are completed monthly, and these provide a review of care and include the views of stakeholders such as parents or carers.

An experienced and stable team of staff is available day and night to meet the needs of young people. Given recent events, there is some fatigue. This may have contributed to shortfalls noted in this report, including the need for greater consistency. Although somewhat frustrated by the lack of engagement by young people at this time, staff remain upbeat and committed to working with them. Staff commented that they are very well-supported by the management team and receive regular formal supervision alongside ongoing support from each other. Despite some levels of understandable tiredness, morale is said to be 'good'.

Training and induction programmes generally provide staff with appropriate opportunities to learn and develop their skills. Staff receive appropriate training as part of their induction and probation periods. This includes training on child protection, restraint and self-harm. A majority of staff have obtained the required care awards, while all others are undertaking them, or are due to commence.

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. Its 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 and young people being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after 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 in which 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 that 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 whom 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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