

Children's home inspection – Full

Inspection date	06/10/2016
Unique reference number	SC049189
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	The Partnership of Care Today Children's Services
Registered provider address	Lansdowne House 85 Buxton Road Stockport Cheshire SK2 6LR

Responsible individual	Vivien Snape
Registered manager	Dave Edwards
Inspector	Sarah Oldham

Inspection date	06/10/2016
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	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

SC049189

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- The registered manager undertakes matching of young people's needs prior to placement. However, some young people have not settled within the home, and this has resulted in a number of admissions and discharges over a six-month period. This impacts on the stability of placement and does not enable all young people to develop positive attachments.
- Young people have not consistently engaged in education, although they are encouraged to do so. Staff do not have an overall understanding of the individual targets and plans for future progress.
- The registered manager has not consistently sent significant event notifications to Ofsted when there has been an area of concern.
- Some staff are unable to manage young people's behaviour effectively and help them to reduce anti-social behaviour outside of the home. There have been a number of complaints from the local community directly to the home, the police and Ofsted.
- Recent damage to the property includes graffiti on the living-room wall and broken wardrobes in a young person's bedroom. This does not provide a homely and welcoming environment for the young people or encourage them to invest in the home.

The children's home strengths

- Young people who have recently moved to the home have made progress during their short period of living there. This includes a reduction in missing-from-home incidents.
- The staff provide good support to young people and their families to maintain positive relationships.
- The registered manager and staff provide regular updates to other professionals to ensure that they have the necessary information about the young people.

- Young people are engaged in a number of activities to enable them to develop interests they can continue with when they leave the home.
- Young people are supported to learn skills for adulthood, for example learning to budget, shop and prepare meals.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on: (a) mutual respect and trust (b) an understanding about acceptable behaviour, and (c) positive responses to other children and adults. Regulation 11 (2)(a)(ii)	14/12/2016
To meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must: 13 (2)(d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child 13 (2)(e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. Regulation 13 (2) (d) and (e)	14/12/2016
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	30/11/2016

Recommendations

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

- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the house without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards',

page 46, paragraph 9.36)

- Staff should have the knowledge and skills to understand each child's education and training targets and their next steps for learning. If a child's progress is not in line with their agreed targets or next steps, staff should seek expert advice from education professionals, such as the Virtual School Head, SENCO, learning mentor or teacher. Staff must challenge the child's education or training provider if the child does not receive sufficient support to progress as outlined in their relevant plans. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.11)
- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care for three children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities. The home forms part of a large social care company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
05/08/2015	Full	Good
06/02/2015	Full	Requires improvement
28/08/2014	Interim	Not judged

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Requires improvement
Some young people have made positive progress and achieved good outcomes. However, this has not been consistent for all of them. There have been six admissions to the home since the last inspection, with three of these resulting in young people moving due to behaviours which placed them at risk of harm, including missing from home and not engaging within the home. This impacts on young people forming positive attachments. The current young people living at the home are engaging with staff and beginning to make progress. The home works in partnership with education providers and also links with the organisation's educational lead to obtain in-house tutors while sourcing full-time educational placements. However, due to the increase in short-term placements, educational attendance has not been consistent for all young people. Although staff encourage and support young people to attend education, and stress the importance of it, they are unclear about the educational levels, targets and attainment for young people. This reduces their ability to promote education effectively. Staffing levels have been limited, with a team of only three permanent staff remaining, supported by five staff on 'as required' contracts. The manager has increased the number of shifts he is working, to provide stability to the young people and staff. However, this impacts on the overall oversight of the home, with the result that some records are not being monitored effectively. An example of this is records of physical intervention which the manager is involved in. There is no independent oversight of these review patterns and trends. Staff promote good health with young people. They ensure that the young people are registered with community healthcare professionals. Staff support and encourage them to attend appointments and, where additional healthcare needs are identified, they request referrals to appropriate healthcare resources, including children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Staff have a good understanding of the impact that smoking, alcohol and substance misuse can have on young people's health and well-being and encourage engagement with specialist services to minimise these risks. The home has effective communication with other services that are involved in the protection and welfare of young people, including placing authority social workers, police and youth offending teams. One social worker commented: 'Staff ensure I receive regular updates and progress reports, and [they] respond to telephone calls and requests promptly.' Police also say that the home has good levels of	

communication and will alert them to any concerns about young people living at the home.

Young people currently living at the home speak positively about the home and the staff. One young person said: 'Staff are good here, they listen to me and help me to plan for my future. It feels better here with me and the other young person living here.' Another young person said; 'This is a good home to live in. I feel settled and want to do well. I want to increase my attendance with education and want to start at main school soon.'

Young people are encouraged to gain and practise skills for their future. This includes budgeting, shopping and preparing meals. Those young people who are aged 16 and over receive a semi-independence budget to enable them to understand finances for when they go on to live independently.

Social activities are supported well. Young people go to the cinema, leisure centres, go-karting and use other community resources, for example libraries, museums and local parks. Staff support young people to get to know the local area and community, enabling them to have a good sense of how to get to different places.

Staff promote positive contact between young people, their families and other people who are significant to them. They are aware of any restrictions that may be in place and support young people to understand the reasons for this.

There have been some breaches in regulations. Requirements have been made in relation to staffing levels and continuity, supporting young people to develop positive relationships, and notifying significant events to the regulator in a timely manner. Recommendations are in relation to education, independent oversight of physical intervention records, and staff knowledge of educational attainment and targets for young people, among other areas.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Young people are supported to minimise and reduce behaviours which place them at risk of harm. While strategies implemented have had a positive impact for some young people, this has not been the case for all who have lived at the home in the past six months. There have also been a number of young people who failed to return to the home as agreed in their individual plans and who were therefore reported as missing. Staff understand the risks associated with this for young	

people and therefore try to contact them or look for them. They follow procedures to report them missing to the police and maintain records of action taken. When young people make contact with the home, staff will collect them and make sure they are offered something to eat and drink. They talk to them to try to establish why they were missing and the reason for this. However, staff do not ensure that return interviews are consistently offered or undertaken to enable young people to discuss any potential reasons contributing to their absences from the home.

Staff have an understanding of strategies to use to help young people manage their behaviours. However, these are not always successful, and there have been recent incidents both within the home and outside when the staff have not managed behaviours effectively. Complaints have been made to the home, police and Ofsted. Incidents have included throwing bins outside, being abusive and throwing things into neighbouring gardens. The registered manager and staff have spoken with the young people about the impact of their behaviours. Young people have apologised recently and contributed to flowers which have been given to the neighbours. This resulted in a neighbour ringing the home to thank them for this gesture.

The registered manager has followed procedures in relation to a recent allegation by notifying effectively and following guidance from the Local Authority Designated Officer. Records in relation to this confirm the measures put in place to safeguard the young people and the outcome of the investigation.

The young people currently living at the home say that they feel safe and are confident in raising any concerns with the manager or staff. There had previously been some incidents of bullying, but this was discussed in young people's meetings. One young person said: 'I can talk to the manager. He will listen and make sure that something is done to help me.' Another young person said: 'I like living here. It's better than where I was previously and now there has been a change in young people it feels OK.'

Regular health and safety checks are completed to ensure that equipment within the home is maintained and safe to use. Decoration and maintenance is undertaken, although there are outstanding repairs to a young person's wardrobe, and graffiti on the lounge wall.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

The registered manager has been in post for a number of years and is suitably qualified and experienced. He demonstrates a commitment to supporting children and young people with complex emotional and behaviour difficulties. He works alongside staff, undertaking a number of shifts to enable him to have a good understanding of how the home functions. However, over recent months these have increased due to covering for staff shortage. This means he has had less time to fulfil his management role, and this has impacted on the overall oversight of reporting and recording. Additional recruitment of staff is ongoing, and the manager is confident that within the next month he will have vacant posts filled, to provide greater continuity to the young people.

The statement of purpose refers to accepting emergency admissions. Although the manager undertakes impact assessments for the young people admitted to the home, some placements have ended within a short period of time. This makes it difficult to ascertain the progress these young people make during their time at the home.

Staff receive supervision from the manager on a regular basis and take part in regular handovers and team meetings.

The recent increase in admission and discharges of young people has impacted on the level of recording and detailed care planning, with some records containing limited information. Case files contain current and historical information which is not clearly separated, and this makes it unclear of progress and outcomes for some young people.

The manager promotes open communication with other professionals and agencies involved in the young people's care. One social worker commented that they received regular verbal updates from the manager in addition to weekly reports for the young people in placement. Another professional from the youth offending service said: 'The manager and staff provide effective communication to make sure I am aware of any concerns or issues in connection to the young person I am working with.'

The manager responds to complaints and allegations in accordance with policies and procedures. Recent complaints from neighbours regarding young people's behaviour are being addressed. Risk assessments and behaviour management plans have been updated. Staff hold regular discussions with young people in relation to behaviour and its impact on the other people. The manager has spoken with neighbours and is addressing their concerns.

The manager is aware of the importance of ensuring that significant events relating to the welfare and protection of young people living at the home are reported appropriately. However, a recent event, although referred to some agencies, was not referred to Ofsted. This does not enable the regulator to have an oversight of the management of this and take action if necessary.



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 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 where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that 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 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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