

SC049189

Registered provider: The Partnership of Care Today Children's Services

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

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.

Inspection dates: 24 to 25 May 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: 9 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

- Initial impact matching does not consistently identify the potential impact of behaviours of young people in relation to the others living at the home. This has resulted in some young people not getting on with each other. This means that some young people continue with negative, aggressive and harmful behaviours. This has resulted in some of these behaviours continuing in the local community, with placements ending to safeguard the young people.
- Behaviour management plans are not consistently clear and detailed for all young people.
- The area risk assessment has not been updated to reflect updated information about the area and the potential impact of this on young people living in the home.
- Some recording is held in a number of formats and does not provide a clear overview of the progress for all young people. Additionally, some handwritten records are difficult to read and have not been signed by the authors.
- The broken window has not been replaced in a timely manner and this does not ensure that the home is maintained to a good standard in all areas.

The children's home's strengths

- The manager is proactive in addressing behaviours with young people and provides regular support to staff to help them provide consistency in their approach.
- Where there are identified shortfalls in practice, the manager follows these up with individual staff members to enable them to reflect on and improve their practice.
- Young people currently at the home are very positive about their experiences and the progress they have made since moving into the home.
- The manager and organisation have clear development plans for the service. They understand the strengths of the service and areas for improvement and are taking appropriate steps to address these.
- Staff recognise that the home has had a period of change and instability in terms of some young people's placements. However, they have high aspirations for all young people and are committed to supporting young people to make

progress.

- Staff feel they have good levels of support through formal and informal supervision. They continue to share and discuss ideas to help the young people to settle into the home and have a range of opportunities to develop their skills for moving on to independence and adulthood.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
06/10/2016	Full	Requires improvement
18/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
05/08/2015	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
11: The positive relationships standard 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. 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 and help each child develop socially aware behaviour. (Regulation 11(1)(a)(I) and(ii))	30/07/2017
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 the premises used for the purpose of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded and that the premises used for the purpose 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) and (2)(c) and (d)). This is in relation to ensuring the home is located in an appropriate area and the broken window is repaired in a timely manner.	30/07/2017
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 signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 Schedule 3(14))	30/07/2017

46: Review of premises

30/07/2017

The registered manager must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purpose of the children's home at least once in each calendar year, taking into account the requirement in regulation 12 (2)(c) the protection of children standard (Regulation 46 (1)).

Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- Children should be encouraged to develop positive relationships with others both in and outside of the home as set out in the positive relationship standard. However, staff should be alert to the possibility that children may be at risk from such relationships, including other children in the home, staff, family members, friends and others outside of the home, and they therefore should take appropriate steps to protect a child where they have concerns for a child's safety. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.13)

Inspection judgements

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

The majority of young people moving into the home do so on a planned basis. This enables them to visit and meet other young people and the staff team. Where a visit is not possible, information is provided, helping them to have an understanding about the home. This contributes to them feeling supported when they move in and helps with developing positive relationships with the staff. However, there have been a number of placements that ended due to safeguarding concerns. While the manager and staff have a good understanding of the vulnerabilities of young people when they present behaviours which place them at risk, behaviour management has not been effective in helping some of the young people understand the consequences of their behaviours and potential risks to their safety. For example, there have been a number of incidents of young people getting involved in some negative behaviours with other young people in the local community and a complaint was received at the end of last year with regard to the behaviour of the young people. This was addressed with the young people by the manager, resulting in the young people apologising to the neighbours. The home has been targeted by other young people in the community and this has been reported to the police. That said, there has been an improvement in some young people's behaviours and they have made good progress from their initial starting points. This

includes a significant reduction in the number of missing-from-home incidents for one young person.

Staff understand the importance of education. They encourage young people who have not attended school for a long time to commence education to help them achieve some qualifications that will assist them in the future. They attain these qualifications by either attending school or receiving support in the home from tutors who help them prepare for school or college. One young person said 'I didn't go to lessons in my previous care homes. I just went missing all the time and didn't want to be there. Since I have moved here, I have really reduced the times I have been missing and I will contact the home to let them know I am alright. I am doing well with the tutor and I am going to look at colleges soon. This place has been really good for me.' Another young person who was staying at the home during a planned short stay had also been encouraged to attend school to take exams, which previously they had been declining to do. This young person said 'My stay here has been really good for me. I was a bit worried about coming here at first, but the staff have been good and given me lots of encouragement.'

The home supports young people to remain in contact with family and friends if it is safe for them to do so. The home has been instrumental in helping different family members get together by looking at solutions to help manage family dynamics; as a result, young people have been given cohesive support by their families. This includes supporting contact with siblings. Staff understand the emotional impact contact can have on young people and provide support to enable them to discuss their feelings if they wish to do so. This sensitive and supportive understanding along with the staff's organisation and facilitation of the practical arrangements means young people benefit from keeping in contact with people who are important to them in a safe, positive and enjoyable way.

Staff support young people to take part in a range of activities both in the home and the community. Some young people have engaged in these more than others. However, one young person said, 'It's good to have a choice of things to do.' Activities include football, sports, use of local leisure facilities, going to the cinema or trips into Manchester. Staff share their interests and hobbies and this helps young people to develop some of their own. This helps them to learn social skills, engage in the community and have interests they can continue when they move on from the home.

Young people are registered with local health care services, including doctors, dentists and opticians. Routine health care appointments are generally attended. However, if young people decline, staff arrange new appointments. Where additional, specialist services are needed, these are followed up. The home has access to the organisation's therapist and where there is an identified need, with agreement of social workers, the home arranges this support. Young people who smoke or misuse illegal substances are helped by staff to understand the impact this has on their overall health and well-being. Staff make appropriate referrals to specialist services. These measures help promote the physical and emotional health of the young people.

Regular key-worker sessions are held and staff provide regular updates to social workers regarding the progress of, or any concerns about, each young person. One social worker

said, 'The home communicates effectively with the local authority and there is clear evidence of the progress the young person has made during their time at the home.'

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

There have been a number of admissions and discharges over the past 12 months. The discharges have been due to safeguarding concerns. Although the manager undertakes matching of young people, this matching does not take into account fully the area risk assessment and issues within the local community.

The core staff team is experienced and has a good understanding of why young people demonstrate or engage in behaviours that may place them at risk of harm. The staff discuss these issues with the young people and offer strategies that help to minimise potential harmful behaviours. However, despite staff working hard to implement boundaries and clear interventions, these have not always proved to be effective. The proximity of this children's home to another one has also affected the overall stability of placements. This is due in part to their encouragement of one another to get involved in anti-social behaviours within the community. This has included throwing stones and being targeted by local youths, resulting in a number of altercations. The staff have worked hard to minimise this risk. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the home has been targeted by young people within the community with an incident where a brick was thrown through the window. There have also been occasions when groups of young people have gathered outside of the home and the staff have had to request that they move away from the property. This has an impact on the young people living at the home and the view of the local community regarding the home and the children living there. The manager and the organisation are currently looking for alternative accommodation in an area, which will meet the needs of young people the home cares for.

There have been some occasions when young people have been subject to bullying, or have instigated it, demonstrating that they have shown negative behaviour towards one another. Although this is followed up through individual key-work sessions to discuss the impact of bullying, this is not reflected consistently within individual care plans where it has been identified there is a risk of this happening.

All staff have undertaken safeguarding training, and endeavour to de-escalate negative behaviours. Restraint is used only if there is a risk of a young people harming themselves or others. Records are maintained of these and demonstrate clearly the events prior to, during and following a restraint. The manager or an external manager to the home reviews these to ensure that the restraint used was appropriate. Young people and staff are offered an opportunity to discuss the event and whether it could have been managed differently. This enables positive reflection on how to address behaviour and practice. However, some behaviours have increased and resulted in the need to contact the police. Where it is apparent, despite behaviour strategies implemented, that the staff are unable to meet the needs of young people, the manager takes the necessary action to notify the placing authority to enable an alternative placement to be identified.

There has been a significant reduction in the frequency with which young people go missing from home. Staff provide encouragement to young people to reduce this, including undertaking activities with young people and developing positive relationships with family members in order to work in partnership with them. This supports young people to feel cared for and have the confidence to return to the home. There has been one missing-from-home incident in which staff did not follow procedures in reporting the young person missing from home. They did try to locate him in the local area and although he was only missing for a short period of time, a significant safeguarding concern occurred. The manager has addressed this with staff in supervision and in a team meeting. Individual risk assessments have been updated and staff are fully aware of individual missing-from-care procedures for each individual young person.

Young people say they feel safe with the staff. One young person said, 'The staff here are really sound and take time to make sure I am okay. This home is the only kids' home I have liked living in and the times I have been reported as missing are much lower than anywhere I have lived before. I get on with all of the staff, really like the home, I just don't like the area it is in so I don't hang around here much.' Another young person said, 'I am only staying here for a short while. It's been planned and I'm going back home tomorrow, but I have felt safe and staff have looked after me while I have been here. I know around here and that helps.'

Young people know how to make a complaint and say they are confident they will be able to speak to the manager about any concerns they have. Young people's meetings also enable them to raise any concerns they may have. Additionally, they can speak with other adults, including social workers and independent visitors, if they wish to do so. Concerns and complaints are responded to in a timely manner and an audit trail is maintained of the action taken and the outcome.

Recruitment and selection is robust, with the home maintaining relevant details of the checks and their outcomes that are accessible for inspection. Staff verify each visitor to the home and the reason for their visit. Regular health and safety checks, including fire risk assessments, are undertaken on a regular basis. Young people and staff know what to do in the event of a fire. These measures contribute to safeguarding young people. However, the area risk assessment requires updating to reflect any changes or concerns within the area and the impact these may have in relation to young people being placed at the home.

The home is generally maintained to a good standard with appropriate fixtures and furnishings, providing young people with a comfortable home to live in. However, the front bay window has recently been broken and is boarded up. At the time of the inspection, the replacement glass had not been ordered and this not only impacts on the young people living at the home, it also does not portray a positive, welcoming image of the home within the community.

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

The home is managed by an established, experienced and qualified manager. He was registered by the previous inspectorate and has been based at this home for a number of years. He is supported in his role by a suitably experienced deputy manager who joined the organisation within the past twelve months. There is a core staff team, which is further complemented by additional staff employed by the organisation on flexible contracts. The manager endeavours to ensure the stability of the staff team to provide continuity of care to young people. However, there have been some recent changes within the team although the impact for young people has been minimal due to the manager working some shifts to support the young people. Recruitment has recently been undertaken, with the manager confident that the new staff members will start shortly. This will enable him to have additional managerial time in the home.

The manager and the staff team have high aspirations for young people. The home operates in line with its statement of purpose, providing care for up to three young people from 14 up to 17 years of age upon admission. The vast majority of staff hold appropriate qualifications and are experienced. However, recent changes within the team and some challenging behaviours displayed by young people have impacted on some of their recording. This includes signing and dating of some recording in young people's records. This has been raised by the manager in recent staff meetings. The home has recently discharged a young person due to increased safeguarding concerns and behaviours which impacted on the other young people living there. This includes the breaking of a window and the need to contact police due to a potential risk of harm. Although these behaviours were identified prior to placement, they increased and the placement was ended. However, there have been some concerns raised by the local councillor which the organisation were responding to at the time of the inspection.

The manager has completed an area risk assessment previously. However, this has not been updated to reflect recent safeguarding concerns. Individual impact assessments are completed as part of the admission process to the home. However, these are not robust to minimise the potential breakdown of young people's placements. As a result, these assessments have an impact on consistency and stability for some young people.

Staff receive regular supervision, which they value. It is supportive, and enables them to reflect on their practice and focus on outcomes for young people. They access regular training, including safeguarding, child sexual exploitation and self-harm. All mandatory training is updated regularly and staff meetings offer the opportunity to discuss relevant research and practice.

The manager has a good oversight of the progress young people have made and ensures that there is regular communication with other professionals to further support this. A strength of the home is that it works with parents to enable them to be involved and understand the progress as well as the ongoing needs of their child.

Individual care plans for young people are, in the main, detailed and they reflect the

aims and objectives of the placement. These are reviewed on a monthly basis. However, some information is unclear and does not reflect recent changes to plans. This could impact on a young person's understanding of their progress. That said, weekly progress meetings are held with young people and their views recorded.

Young people are encouraged to be involved in planning and choosing the decor in the home. One young person had helped in decorating of his bedroom and this has supported him to feel settled in the home. The communal areas of the home are decorated and maintained.

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 difference 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 who 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: SC049189

Provision sub-type: 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: social care inspector

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