

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC052744
Inspector	Denise Jolly
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Quality Protects Children Ltd
Registered person address	Hill House Archway Road Huyton Liverpool L36 9XB
Responsible individual	Anthony Nolan
Registered manager	Danielle Winifred Nevin
Date of last inspection	29/01/2014

Inspection date	06/06/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	inadequate
Outcomes for children and young people	inadequate
Quality of care	inadequate
Keeping children and young people safe	inadequate
Leadership and management	inadequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	inadequate
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Since the last inspection, managers have failed to consistently progress outcomes for complex and challenging young people. A change in the group of young people resident, alongside a number of staff being reallocated within the organisation, has disrupted continuity of care and relationships in the home. The home has failed to improve the quality of care offered, to help some young people to engage positively, while others have been drawn in to group antisocial behaviour.

Young people experience inadequate outcomes across a number of areas that affect their future prospects, safety and wellbeing. This is primarily due to the failure of leaders and managers to ensure that young people placed in the home do not pose unacceptable risks to the safety and security of others. Furthermore, they fail to effect positive transition from the home for young people who are unable to engage with the home, to improve their prospects.

Some allegations and complaints from young people have not progressed to a satisfactory conclusion in a timely way. Managers do not consistently inform Ofsted about all serious complaints made about staff. On occasion, managers fail to complete risk assessments to protect young people in the home. These shortfalls fail to protect both staff and young people and undermines self-confidence and trust in

others, leaving them feeling vulnerable about their futures.

Although staff remain very committed to young people, and try their best to build effective relationships, not all young people are happy about living in the home, and some find living many miles from their friends and families too great a burden. Leaders and managers have failed to address this issue effectively, when admitting young people from out of area.

Young people do not always respond well to staff when they are encouraged to consider the impact of poor choices. Consequently, they become involved in violent and destructive incidents, and increasing contact with the police and criminal justice procedures. Staff and young people have been subject to extremes of threat, violence and abuse, and staff have resorted to behaviour management strategies that are not consistent with good practice, such as locking doors as a control measure.

The Statement of Purpose does not provide accurate information about the home. In the case of admission procedures, practise actively undermines the aims and objectives of the home. Subsequently, group dynamics have impacted negatively on young people's prospects.

Those responsible for monitoring the conduct of the home have failed to recognise the impact of the shortfalls identified during the inspection, for example, with regard to behaviour management and sanctions. Ofsted and the Registered Manager have not received reports from the provider about the conduct of the home within the appropriate timescales. The home's development plan does not identify or adequately address those shortfalls. This has limited the ability of managers to maintain or improve the quality of childcare they provide.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This service provides residential accommodation for up to five looked after young people, all with complex emotional and behavioural needs. The home is owned by a private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/01/2014	Interim	good progress
27/06/2013	Full	good
24/09/2012	Interim	inadequate progress
23/05/2012	Full	good

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
5 (2001)	ensure that the home keeps under review and revises the statement of purpose and notifies HMCI of any revision: to take into account emergency admissions to the home (Regulation 5(a) & (b))	04/07/2014
11 (2001)	ensure the home makes proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated there; in particular by evaluating the impact of the mix of young people resident upon the safety of staff and young people, and ensuring there is adequate review of placement suitability arising from young people's behaviour in the home and local community (Regulation 11 (1a))	04/07/2014

11 (2001)	ensure the home makes proper provision for the care education, supervision, support and, where appropriate, treatment, of children accommodated there; in particular to ensure effective transition to and from the home, and ensuring placement plans and risk assessments are up to date (Regulation 11 (1b))	04/07/2014
16 (2001)	ensure that the home makes prompt referral to the local authority of an allegation of racist and verbal abuse (Regulation 16 (2b))	04/07/2014
16 (2001)	ensure that the home notifies HMCI of any allegation of abuse (Regulation 16 (2c))	04/07/2014
16 (2001)	ensure consideration is given to the measures which may be necessary to protect children following an allegation of abuse (Regulation 16 (2e))	04/07/2014
17B (2001)	ensure that staff complete within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, including restriction of liberty and restraint, a written record in a volume kept for the purpose (Regulation 17B (3))	04/07/2014
24 (2001)	ensure that the home makes a written record of all complaints made by young people, particularly in regard to allegations of bullying between young people, and subsequently of the action taken in response and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24 (5))	04/07/2014
28 (2001)	ensure the home maintains all records specified in Schedule 3; in particular a copy of the child's plan of care or placement plan prepared by his placing authority (Regulation 28 (1a))	04/07/2014
29 (2001)	ensure the home maintains the records specified in Schedule 4, in particular the address of children prior to and on leaving the home (Regulation 29 (1))	04/07/2014
33 (2001)	ensure that the home provides up-to-date copies of the independent person's report to HMCI (Regulation 33 (9a))	04/07/2014
33 (2001)	ensure that a copy of the independent person's report is provided to the registered manager; specifically in a timely way for them to give consideration to actions that may be required (Regulation 33 (9d))	04/07/2014
34 (2001)	ensure there is a system for improving the quality of care in the home arising from monitoring of the home, in particular the impact of young people's behaviour on the safety and security of the home,	04/07/2014

	actions taken regarding complaints and allegations, and the quality of young people's records. (Regulation 34 (1(b)):	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure young people receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints they raise, and are kept informed of progress (NMS 1.6)
- ensure young people develop and practice skills to build and maintain positive relationships, and resolve conflicts positively (NMS 3.5)
- ensure the home regularly reviews incidents of challenging behaviour, examines trends or issues emerging, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice (NMS 3.21)
- ensure the home's approach to care consistently minimises the need for police involvement to deal with challenging behaviour, and the approach used is agreed with the local police (NMS 3.22)
- ensure staff actively promote the welfare of young people specifically by time and appropriate reporting of allegations made against staff, and by thorough investigation of any allegation of bullying made by young people (NMS 4.2)
- ensure that physical restrictions on normal movement within or from the home are not used unless this promotes their welfare and development. Such restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children (NMS 10.4)
- ensure the home implements clear procedures for introducing young people to the home, which covers planned, and where permitted, emergency placements (NMS 11.1)
- ensure the home only provides admission to young people whose assessed needs they can reasonably be expected to meet (NMS 11.2)
- ensure the registered person does not admit young people in an emergency unless explicitly included as a function of the home (NMS 11.7)
- ensure the registered person makes every effort to achieve continuity of staff so that young people's attachments are not overly disrupted (NMS 17.8)
- ensure that planned and reviewed induction to the home takes place for staff they are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children for the purpose of the setting: specifically for those staff who are transferred from other establishments within the organisation (NMS 18.1)
- ensure the registered provider's written report of a regulation 33 visit is lodged

the home for the manager and staff to read and respond to (NMS 21.8)

- ensure records are clear and up to date particularly that there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action where needed, for example, to update risk management plans and behaviour support plans for young people, and to ensure all information is consistent across the home's documents (NMS 22.1)
- ensure that a key worker who ensures the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child monitors each child's Placement Plan (NMS 25.2)
- ensure that the result of all reviews of Placement Plans are recorded on the child's file, and individuals responsible for pursuing actions at the home are clearly identified (NMS 25.8)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people inadequate

Young people live in a home that has suffered a period of inconsistent staffing, and many changes in the mix of young people in the home. Young people have experienced disrupted relationships due to sudden staff changes, prompted in part by the organisation's services review. A mix of new and known permanent staff, and relief staff has cared for young people. Young people demonstrate inconsistent responses to each other, and to staff who do not know them well. Some young people have improved outcomes in some areas of their lives, such as increased engagement with education, but others have deteriorated during their time at the home, such as increased involvement with the police.

Young people demonstrate inconsistency in their relationships, both with each other, and with adults who support them. Young people spoke with the inspector during the inspection. They said that they liked living in the home and staff were always willing to support them. One young person said, 'The best bit about my day is waking up in the home.' Most young people respond positively to staff when they are in a one-to-one situation, but group dynamics often mean that young people disengage with staff when other young people are becoming disruptive.

Young people individually acknowledge that they have been drawn into extremes of violent and destructive behaviour because of the mix of young people in the home. Young people have brought weapons into the home, and this has endangered the safety of all. They have been involved in fights with each other, and assaulted staff. Independent visitors report that some young people do not express well-being and contentment in the home.

Young people do not recognise the impact of the negative alliances between them. Incidents occur when young people incite or follow others to escalate their behaviour to cause damage and disruption in the home that spills out into the garden and street. During these episodes, young people do not respond to the prolonged efforts of staff to redirect their behaviour. Staff or neighbours call the police to restore order, and this means young people are at increased risk of criminalisation.

Young people are at increased risk of criminalisation due to escalating involvement with the police and the courts. With staff encouragement, some young people attend sessions with youth offending services. However, some young people do not engage with staff or other professionals who are willing to help them understand the risks associated with drug abuse, anti-social behaviour or criminal activity. Young people breach their bail conditions and curfew limits and consequently, they are at risk of custodial sentences.

Some young people confirm they contribute to their individual placement plan. They

say they attend their planning meetings and have their say about the things that are important to them. This helps them to engage with positive plans, for example, to engage with education, or reduce episodes of being missing. This ensures that they are comfortable with identified goals and strategies, and are able to plan for their futures. One young person said, 'I am working well at school, and want to get on a plumbing course, as this will help me to be independent. I plan to stay in this home until then.'

However, not all young people believe they have a say their placement, or have settled into the home. Some young people have been unable to manage the distance they live from their friends and families. This has led to significant periods of them being missing, with increased risks of inappropriate relationships, drug misuse and criminal behaviour. For others, they have demonstrated their unhappiness by extreme levels of damage to the home, poor relationships with other young people, assault of staff, and disruption to the routine of the home by prolonged night-time disturbance. Ultimately, this has led to them being discharged in an emergency, or to a children's home they have no knowledge of. Young people therefore do not benefit from clearly identified plans to help them to improve, or participate in planning for their futures. They suffer continually disrupted relationships that impair their self-esteem, levels of trust, and willingness to engage with professionals.

Contrary to published admission procedures, not all young people benefit from a placement that is arranged following a comprehensive referral, risk assessment, and assessment of their needs. This means they are admitted without a suitable plan to meet their needs and without sufficient consideration or assessment of the potential incompatibility with young people already living in the home. Staff and other professionals say that this departure from procedure has contributed to poor group dynamics that have significantly influenced the ability of young people to make progress in the placement. Staff say that each young person has the capacity to make good progress, but that progress is limited by the negative behaviour of the group and the lack of cooperation with staff that young people sometimes demonstrate when they are together.

Quality of care

inadequate

Young people engage in relationships with staff and with each other that can be volatile and unpredictable, sometimes leading to conflict and harmful behaviour. This includes inappropriate attachments, manifested by encouraging each other to engage in anti-social, disruptive and criminal activity, both inside and outside of the home. Young people have also demonstrated verbally abusive and physically violent behaviour towards targeted individuals, with serious consequences. Currently, there are reduced numbers of young people living in the home. This is due to unplanned discharges from the home, and has recently afforded an opportunity for staff to begin work with young people to improve the quality of care provided.

A minority of young people say that they do not have positive relationships with other young people because they feel bullied in the home. They say that staff are ineffective in their efforts to improve relationships in the home. As a result, they do not return to the home at agreed times, and when they are in the home relationships frequently deteriorate to verbal threats and physical violence. Because relationships are volatile in the home, staff do not respond to complaints appropriately, when young people say they are being bullied. This further disempowers young people, who resort to their own solutions to promoting their safety and welfare, such as bringing weapons into the home, or creating serious damage to property when staff prevent them from leaving the home. In turn, this increases their criminal profile, as police are called in order to restore calm and on occasions this leads to their arrest.

It is through the day-to-day interactions with staff that young people raise most comments. Young people enjoy choosing and cooking their own choice of food, and participate in jobs around the house in order to earn additional cash. Records indicate that staff do not consistently engage the group in contributing to the running of the home. For example, young person's meetings have become arenas where staff tell young people about the rules of the home, and what sanctions will be imposed if they are broken. This does not enable young people to reflect upon the impact of their behaviour, or take responsibility for their actions.

Not all young people have care plans in place, agreed with the placing authority, although all have a plan of care devised by a key worker. Managers chase missing documents but do not escalate their efforts to ensure appropriate plans are secured and in place. Staff do not consistently update plans to reflect the changing needs of young people. For example, changes in plans that result from planned review or emergency meetings are not included because the minutes of those meetings are not consistently available. This means that staff do not have consistent knowledge about how to support young people so as to motivate them to improve. Additionally records demonstrate that staff do not routinely evaluate the impact of any planned approach, such as diverting young people from drug misuse. Subsequently, there are no amended plans in place for when young people do not progress.

All young people make progress in engaging in education and training. This is because staff employ a wide range of options and motivators to encourage young people to change their views about the value of education. Flexible programmes support young people's return to education, using a variety of home tutoring, leading to planned placements in the community that eventually lead to full time mainstream education courses. Staff are skilled in working with most young people, to promote their development in this area. When incentive schemes fail to motivate young people staff amend the programme to identify alternative motivators to re-engage young people. Inhibiting factors are when young people are missing and the emergency movement of young people.

Staff remain motivated to engage young people in planning for their futures. This includes preparation for independent living. When necessary, young people have

pathway plans that identify their future goals and aspirations. Staff provide good levels of support for young people to practice and develop the skills necessary for lives as successful young adults. Young people are confident that staff will enable them to acquire the skills and knowledge that underpin successful independence. One young person said, 'It will be hard to leave here, but I know staff will help me find a place that I will be happy in.'

Although opportunities for staff and young people to engage in positive leisure activities have been limited due to upheaval in the home, young people say that they have enjoyed a broad range of activities such as playing football, going to the gym, or going shopping or to the cinema with staff. Staff accompany young people on their journeys to visit friends and families who are far away to support them to maintain important contact with their culture and heritage.

Keeping children and young people safe inadequate

The children's home has suffered a very unsettled period. The impact of inconsistent care provided by changing staff, together with admissions of young people to the home who did not match positively with those already living there, has severely impacted on the safety and wellbeing of young people.

Most young people say that they feel safe in the home. However, young people are at risk of harm from the impact of their own and other's behaviour, such as when they are arrested for assaults on staff and each other. Staff make a constant effort to try to work with young people and promote their safety and well-being. However, inadequate assessment of the impact of the mix of young people resident and inadequate measures in place to reduce the known risks they pose, has created significant shortfalls in the peace and security of the home, reduced the welfare of staff and young people, and the endangered the safety of all.

There is a reduction of instances of young people being reported as missing from the home, although for some young people, the incidence of failure to return on time is still relatively high. While absent, young people engage in unsafe behaviours such as drug and alcohol misuse, creating public disturbance and criminal activity. Staff follow appropriate procedures for reporting young people who are missing, and maintain excellent communication with police safeguarding professionals. The police say that staff have a good understanding of the appropriate protocols, and that staff demonstrate high levels of response when young people fail to return to the home, because they go out and look for them.

Young people's allegations against staff and complaints about the home are not consistently reported to independent child protection professionals. Consequently, young people do not benefit from having their concerns independently investigated, particularly when verbal or racist abuse is alleged. Neither does the home have a record of any consideration given by senior managers to the measures that may be necessary to protect children following an allegation. Furthermore, there is

insufficient recording in the home of any actions that may be identified to improve staff knowledge and understanding of the policies and procedures that underpin effective child protection in the home. Therefore young people live in a home where they do not feel listened to, and with some reporting they are unhappy. Staff fail to assess independently whether actions taken are appropriate, and leaders and managers do not encourage learning from events through staff meetings and discussions. Although the home appears to take appropriate action when allegations of physical abuse are made, they are less clear when allegations of racist and verbal abuse occur. This reduces the security and emotional wellbeing of young people.

Due to a persistently heightened state of alert in the home, staff have used additional measures of control to try to restore order. Therefore, the use of sanctions has increased. Staff do not consistently record all restraints of young people, and fail to recognise the impact when other approaches restrict the freedom of movement of young people in the home. On occasion, staff have resorted to 'lockdown', or locking off access to all common areas, including the front door, to deter exit from the home. The Registered Manager oversees the records, but fails to identify whether the measures are appropriate or effective.

The registered manager and staff say that they have been engaged in a negative crisis cycle, that prevented them from effectively reviewing their approaches to young people. In turn, this led to behaviour management becoming a restrictive and reactive tool, rather than an agent for positive change. This prevented young people from understanding the importance of fair and proportionate discipline, and in many cases increased their frustration and consequent negative reactions.

The home operates a comprehensive system of risk assessment and behaviour management plans for young people. However, staff do not consistently update risk management plans to reflect changes in behaviour, such as increased arrests for criminal damage or assault. Consequently, key work sessions do not provide opportunities for young people to be supported to explore the implications and consequences of their presenting behaviour, or develop strategies to improve.

All staff who work in the home are appropriately checked to help prevent unsuitable people having access to young people.

Leadership and management

inadequate

The Registered Manager has been in post since March 2013. She is suitably qualified to undertake her responsibilities with a Level Three award in childcare, and a Level Five award in the management of children's homes.

Since the last inspection, the group of young people living in the home has changed, and most young people in the home are not making progress in important aspects of their lives. The Statement of Purpose does not provide for emergency admission to

the home. Due to the mix of young people, and a failure to follow admission procedures, the aims of the home have been disrupted, and most young people are not organised or settled sufficiently to receive appropriate care, in any consistent way.

There has been good progress in meeting the recommendation made at the last inspection, to maintain the home effectively. Despite considerable and persistent damage to the property and garden by young people, maintenance is promptly completed, and the home retains a comfortable and pleasant aspect. The manager has overseen improvements to the layout of the common areas, to provide additional space for young people to relax and pursue individual interests, and bathrooms are well maintained.

The independent visitor, who visits on behalf of the provider, is new to the service since the last inspection. However, they do not routinely send their reports on the home to Ofsted, and do not provide a copy in good time to the home for the manager and staff to read and respond to where necessary. Reports do not evaluate the quality and content of records, to ensure the home provides stable, safe and secure care.

The Registered Manager has failed to identify shortfalls in other records kept at the home, particularly relating to sanctions and placement plans. The admission and discharge register does not provide addresses for previous and next placements for young people. Managers have failed to address appropriately all allegations and complaints made by young people, or the accuracy of information available about the home. Additionally there was insufficient notification to Ofsted about allegations made against staff. Overall this means that the current arrangements for the review and evaluation of records and procedures fail to sufficiently safeguard young people.

The Registered Manager has a brief development plan to improve the home, but this does not reflect consultation with young people and other stakeholders, and it has not been updated to reflect the current difficulties in the home. Ineffective monitoring and ineffective planning to improve the conduct of the home has limited the quality of support the home offers to young people, and reduced their prospects.

Staff continue to access a range of training, to refresh their key skills. This includes behaviour support, and drug and alcohol misuse. However, managers do not sufficiently monitor the impact of training upon staff practise, to reduce incidents with young people. Similarly, during recent staffing changes, the manager has not ensured staff that are new to the home have received a planned induction to the home. This means staff and young people did not have the opportunity to get to know each other before staff began to work with them. Furthermore, because of the level of disruption experienced, the staff team have not had the opportunity to regularly review their practise and performance, or identify areas for development arising from differences in approach to young people.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.