

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	11/08/2015
Unique reference number	SC061678
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Care Assist Children's Services Limited
Registered person address	1 High Barn, Back Lane, Aughton, ORMSKIRK, Lancashire, L39 6SX

Responsible individual	Peter Jones
Registered manager	Edward Adams
Inspector	Michelle Edge

Inspection date	11/08/2015
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
There are serious failures that mean children and young people are not protected and their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC061678

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is inadequate because:

- Young people's needs have not been met across aspects of their welfare and development. In particular their safety, emotional well-being and education.
- All young people do not have access to a full time education provision. This impacts on their progress and ability to reach their full potential.
- Care planning and risk assessments are not robust or effectively reviewed to address the changing emotional and social needs of young people.
- Concerns around child sexual exploitation have not been effectively addressed and there are no effective strategies to protect the young person from risks.
- Some young people's risk assessments are poor. They do not promote their safety and welfare by adequately identifying relevant risks, such as Child Sexual exploitation, missing from care and bullying behaviour; nor is there effective action taken to reduce and eliminate them.
- Young people are at serious risk of harm from being missing from the home.
- Staff are not sufficiently skilled to meet the needs of young people
- There is ineffective management oversight of staff practice to promote good standards of care and to identify the weaknesses.
- There is insufficient management review and evaluation of all records and events in the home to understand how staff can better support young people's progress and experiences. Particularly with regard to behaviour management strategies and care planning.

The children's home strengths

- Young people benefit from staff support that encourages positive contact with important people in their lives.
- Young people are supported to attend all health appointments.
- Staff are committed in their role and encourage participation in a range of activities.
- The home is suitably furnished, well maintained and decorated. Young people are encouraged to contribute to the running of the home, through regular house meetings

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
5. In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff (a) seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; (c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans	25/09/2015
The registered person must keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16(3)(a)(b))	25/09/2015
An organisation may only carry on a home if each director of the organisation, except for a director who is the responsible individual, who is involved in the carrying on of a home by that organisation satisfies the requirements in paragraph (6). (Regulation 26 (4)(i))	25/09/2015
If the registered provider is an individual, the individual must undertake such continuing professional development as is necessary to ensure that the individual has the skills needed for carrying on the children's home. The registered manager must undertake such continuing professional development as is necessary to ensure that the registered manager has the skills needed for managing the home. (Regulation 29 (1)(4))	25/09/2015

The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b)(2))	25/09/2015
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b))	25/09/2015

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is one of four owned and managed by a limited company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/03/2015	Interim	sustained effectiveness
29/08/2014	Full	Good
17/01/2014	Interim	Good Progress
21/05/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	inadequate
Some young people make limited progress in key areas of their lives due to weaknesses that impact directly on their welfare and development. In particular their safety, emotional well-being and education. Contrary to the admissions procedure, not all young people have benefited from a comprehensive referral, pre-planning, risk assessment or a thorough assessment of their needs. Young people have moved into the home without a clear plan for work to be undertaken or an assessment of their compatibility with other young people living in the home. There was no evidence of pre-planning meetings taken place or any other relevant documentation. This does not ensure that young people are appropriately placed and the staff team understand and are fully aware of their needs. Young person's records do not contain all of the information about their previous history or current needs. Some Local Authority documentation has not been received and placement plans, risk assessments and behaviour management plans lack sufficient detail. As young people's individual needs and vulnerabilities are not well recorded it is difficult to ensure these needs are met and regularly reviewed Education progress for some young people is limited and does not ensure that young people are supported to reach their full potential, which limits their life chances. While one young person has successfully completed his Information Technology GCSE, two years earlier than planned, other young people were not making measureable process towards their educational potential. One young person had not been in education since January 2015, and prior to the date had not attended school consistently. Staff were unclear about what school he was on role at and did not have an understanding of his needs and his academic levels. Within the home there was no education plan in place and the young person did not have a clear structure or routine to support expectations around their learning. They were leaving the home on a regular basis from early in the morning, returning at their curfew time. This means that young people are not given clear expectations around the need to attend education and they are not engaging in	

suitable structured activities during school times. Therefore young people are not being supported to regain their confidence in education or prepared to return to their new education provision when this is arranged

Staff have developed new health plans for young people and these are detailed and contain all information about their individual health needs. However some young people put their long term health at risk by smoking cigarettes and cannabis on a daily basis. The staff are not sufficiently proactive in securing advice and guidance. For example, when young people present as under the influence of a substance, there is no clear guidance for staff as to what measures should be taken to ensure their safety. Referrals to appropriate advice services have also not been considered. This fails to promote young people's health and well-being.

Young people are provided with opportunities to engage in a range of community based activities that they enjoy. Discussions are held in young people's meetings around any ideas young people may have. Young people had requested a holiday to the caravan and this was arranged. One young person said 'I like going to the caravan I have been before so know the site really well and can show others around'. However during the holiday young people were left unsupervised by staff for periods of time. This placed them at significant risk as they had no adult supervision and during this period of time, incidents of bullying were reported to have taken place. Young people said they were unable to contact anyone and one young person said 'It was the worst day of my life, I felt scared and upset'.

Staff promote and support family contact for young people when it is appropriate to do so. They organise direct contact with family members and carers to help them stay in touch with their brothers and sisters. When young people raise concerns around contact staff have taken appropriate action and discussed plans with Local Authorities. For example, one young person was frustrated that the venue was always the same. Staff talked to contact workers and requested the venue was alternated to include the park and a local community restaurant. The young person was happy with the new arrangement and contact was positive. This improves young people's sense of identity and belonging, and supports their emotional well-being.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
Young people's welfare and safety are being compromised due to poor safeguarding practice. The home have failed to follow their own policies and procedures when young people are missing from care. Individualised risk assessments and action plans had not been updated for several months and did not include any recent episodes of missing. In particular, one young person had been missing for significant periods of time in May, June and July. The records reporting on these incidents were inaccurate and provided different time frames for the missing from care episodes. This made it difficult to ascertain how long the young person had actually been missing for and what action had been taken to ensure their safety. This means that the patterns of episodes of missing from care for young people are not correctly identified nor addressed. There were no clear strategies in place to follow when young people went missing from care, to minimise further risks. Documentation was confusing and provided different strategies on what needed to happen. This did not ensure that all staff followed the same procedure in ensuring young people are safe. When young people returned after missing from care episodes, no independent return home meetings were arranged. Also, the manager does not review the episodes, to consider if appropriate action has been taken. This means the manager and staff are not using their learning from episodes of missing to reduce risks and ensure the safety of young people. One young person living at the home said 'he felt unsafe and unhappy'. Due to his poor social understanding and shortfalls in his communication skills, he had been subject to bullying. He struggled to maintain friendships with the other young people and had been physically assaulted and had received verbal insults, causing him anxiety and distress. Staff had spoken to the other young people but no further action was taken. Due to incidents not being explored effectively and not ensuring that any concerns raised by young people are carefully considered, appropriate strategies were not implemented to ensure that bullying incidents were minimised. This is in breach of the home's own policies and procedures and does not ensure that the safety and welfare of young people is paramount and they are effectively safeguarded. Although a range of risk assessments are in place they, do not relate specifically to	

individual young people and failed to identify any effective prevention measures to reduce risk. For example, there had been recent concerns around a young person being at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, there were also known historical concerns. However, these were not detailed within the assessment. Neither is the action staff should take to minimise and reduce this risk. The lack of clear risk identification and planning to address concerns fails to ensure the safety of the young people.

Partnership working with some local authorities is ineffective. Although a strategy meeting had taken place, missing from home meetings have not happened in line with agreed protocols. Furthermore, discussions between the placing authority and the home regarding the safety of young people are not recorded effectively and risk assessments are not jointly compiled. Consequently, there is a lack of clear planning and coherent working together in the best interest of the young people. This means the safety and welfare of young people is not promoted and they remain at risk of harm.

Young people do not always benefit from clear and consistent boundaries in behaviour management. For example, some young people had financial penalties for not attending health appointments, birthday monies were delayed for concerns around behaviour in the community and there was a restriction on bonus monies for smoking cannabis. This is not proportionate and is ineffective. Staff had also failed to record these sanctions appropriately, recording them as compensation in 'pocket money fines'. The records did not provide a clear overview on what was the behaviour that resulted in the sanction and the time frame and amount young people were expected to pay. There had also been no opportunity for young people to comment of these sanctions and the manager had not had an overview of the appropriateness of the sanctions used. An ineffective sanction means that young people do not link the consequence with action that has resulted in the sanction. Current practice does not encourage young people to reflect on their behaviour nor does it help them to understand the reason for the concern in the first place so they can make a positive choice in the future.

The staff do not have up to date knowledge and skills to adequately safeguard young people and meet their assessed needs. The majority of staff have not had up to date training in safeguarding, child sexual exploitation or restraint. In addition, no staff are trained in first aid, medication, food safety, and fire awareness. This lack of appropriate training compromises the young people's safety whilst living in the home

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
Young people live in a home that is not effectively managed. The home does not meet the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose in ensuring it delivers high quality child care practice. The Statement and the policies and procedures do not provide accurate and up to date information. They still refer to the National Minimum standards and did not reflect the new children's home Regulations and the Quality standards which came into effect in April 2015. This does not ensure that young people are cared for in line with current legislation. The Manager has been in post since July 2014. He is experienced and qualified to Level 4 in childcare. He is waiting to enrol on his level 5 leadership and management qualification, but there have been delays within the organisation. He has also not had the opportunity to attend any other training courses since becoming the manager to increase his own professional development and knowledge base. The Manager is working on a shift pattern with staff that did not include any direct management hours. This does not enable him to have a clear overview of practice issues and monitor effectively while identifying areas of concern. This was of particular importance around young people being potentially at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and high levels of missing from care, where immediate action was not taken and the home's own safeguarding policies were not followed. This does not ensure that the safety and wellbeing of young people is paramount, and meant that risk taking behaviour such as cannabis misuse went unchecked. Notifications also failed to be provided to HMCI, which did not allow the regulator to effectively carry out its safeguarding responsibilities to ensure that young people are protected from harm. The Manager and Assistant Manager have not been provided with supervision training, but are currently providing professional supervision for staff. This does not ensure that staff receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the young people. This lack of training means that the care provided to young people is not in line with the planned care outlined within the home's Statement of Purpose which states '<i>all employees will be provided with</i>	

the opportunity to enhance her/his skills with relevant training that will be provided by the company throughout their period of employment. This training will include instruction in work practices and changing legislation. The Registered Manager reported that he had raised this to Senior Managers on several occasions, but limited further action had been taken.

There are gaps within the monitoring and review systems, which depletes the analysis and evaluation of the care provided and its impact on outcomes for young people. This means that staff are unable to adequately address shortfalls to improve the service being provided. Therefore, outcomes for some young people have deteriorated in key areas of their lives including education, increased risk of harm from being missing or from being bullied and potential safeguarding concerns around Child Sexual Exploitation. Therefore young people's welfare is compromised because they are placed at risk from unsafe practices.

Care planning is poor and fails to promote the continued progress of young people. Internal person centred plans; health plans and risk management plans are not reviewed effectively to identify the changing needs of young people. They also fail to address the issues of risk and how these should be managed safely, to promote consistency of care. There is limited information to measure their progress or identify the effectiveness of the support being provided.

While the manager had sent emails to Children's Services about the lack of Looked after Documentation, Personal Education Plans and concerns around education placements, limited further action was taken. The manager failed to actively challenge when responses from other services were not effective. This does not ensure that young people's individual needs are being addressed and there is resultant unacceptable drift in care planning, decision making and responses to changing needs.

The internal monitoring of the home and the independent visits are ineffective and have failed to identify the weaknesses in practice found during this inspection. For example, the information provided by the placing authority that is maintained on the young person's file is in relation to a previous placement and does not identify the young person's current needs. There are also several pieces of paperwork including accident forms and incident reports that have failed to be compiled, following a young person requiring hospital treatment after sustaining a sports injury. More robust systems are needed to ensure the safety and well-being of the young person is promoted at all times.

The manager's record of staff training demonstrated that a minority of staff are

trained in appropriate skills and approaches that underpin the ethos of the home. This limits the effectiveness of the team to provide consistent, knowledgeable and dynamic care that improves children's lives.

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 looked after children 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 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 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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