

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	28/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC062013
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	After Care (N W) Limited
Registered provider address	31-33 Hoghton Street, Southport, Merseyside PR9 0NS

Responsible individual	Timothy Blundell
Registered manager	Ian Wilson
Inspector	Elaine Allison

Inspection date	28/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Not judged
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

SC062013

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Young people are not in full-time education and staff do not engage them in purposeful learning activities within the home. This is not conducive to effective learning.
- Physical interventions are not routinely recorded. This is contrary to the home's own policies and procedures.
- Staff are not adequately trained to meet the needs of the young people in the home.
- Supervision of staff members does not take place regularly. Furthermore, supervision sessions that do take place are not consistently recorded as required in the company policy. This limits opportunity for managerial oversight and staff development.
- The monitoring of the home and its quality of care is not strong. The manager's monitoring has not been thorough enough to identify the shortfalls found at this inspection.
- The statement of purpose does not provide a clear overview of the home's ethos, aims and objectives.
- Significant events involving young people resident in the home have not been reported to Ofsted.

The children's home strengths

- Young people benefit from having regular and positive contact with family members and other significant people in their lives. Young people reported feeling happy with levels of contact. Also, parents reported high levels of satisfaction at the support that staff provide to their children and at how well staff support contact.
- Young people feel safe living at the home and said that their views are taken into account when decisions are made.
- The registered manager and deputy manager acknowledge the shortfalls found during this inspection and are committed to making improvements.

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
8: The education standard In order to meet the education standard, the registered person must ensure: (1) that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (i) help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; (iii) understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; (x) help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans. In particular, ensure that staff have an agreed plan which is followed when young people are not in education or have been excluded.	15/05/2017
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure: (1) that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if	15/05/2017

necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe; (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; (v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; (b) that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm.	
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must ensure that: (1) the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; (b) ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; (f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. In particular, ensure that the manager has suitable oversight of the day-to-day care provided for young people.	15/05/2017
16: Statement of purpose (1) The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.	15/05/2017

(2) The registered person must provide a copy of the statement of purpose to HMCI and make a copy of it available upon request to— (a) a person who works at the home; (b) a child, or a child for whom accommodation in the home is being considered; (c) a parent of a child, or a parent of a child for whom accommodation in the home is being considered; (d) a child's placing authority; and (e) in the case of a qualifying school, the Secretary of State. (3) The registered person must— (a) keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and (b) notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (4) If a home has a website, the registered person must ensure that a copy of the statement of purpose is published on that website unless the registered person considers that such publication would prejudice the welfare of children in the home. (5) Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. Specifically, the statement of purpose must accurately reflect the conditions of registration. (Regulation 16 (1)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(3)(a)(b)(4)(5))	
33: Employment of staff The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision. (Regulation 33 (4) (b))	15/05/2017
35: Behaviour management policies and records The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— (a) how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and (b) the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be	15/05/2017

used in relation to children in the home. (2) The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. (3) The registered person must ensure that— (a) within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— (i) the name of the child; (ii) details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; (iii) the date, time and location of the use of the measure; (iv) a description of the measure and its duration; (v) details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; (vi) the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; (vii) the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and (viii) a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; (b) within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— (i) has spoken to the user about the measure; and (ii) has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and (c) within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (4) Paragraph (3) does not apply in relation to restraint that is planned or provided for as a matter of routine in the child's EHC plan or statement of special educational needs. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b)(2)(3)(a)(b)(c)(4))	
40: Notification of a serious event The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— (a) a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; (b) an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;	15/05/2017

(c) there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; (d) a child protection enquiry involving a child — (i) is instigated; or (ii) concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or (e) there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (5) A notification made under this regulation— (a) must include details of— (i) the matter; (ii) the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and (iii) any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter; (b) must be made or confirmed in writing. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(5)(a)(b))	
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Recommendations

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

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. In particular, ensure that all documented is dated. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

A private organisation operates this children's home. It is registered to care for up to three young people, of both genders. The home cares for young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/09/2016	Interim	Not judged
08/02/2016	Interim	Not judged
24/11/2015	Interim	Not judged
14/01/2015	Interim	Not judged

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Requires improvement
There are several shortfalls identified that have the potential to impact on young people's welfare and safety. These include: some risk assessments either not being in place, or when they are, not being updated to reflect changes; physical restraints not being documented; shortfalls in staff training; and a lack of management oversight. While this has not directly impacted upon young people's safety, it has the potential to do so. As a result, although the home has a number of strengths, it is not yet judged to be good. The home has only been reopened since December 2016 after a period of two years' voluntary closure. As such, measuring the progress of the two young people presently living in the home is limited, as at the time of inspection one young person had only been living at the home for five days and the other for four weeks. Young people struggle to commit to education or training. Staff were unable to demonstrate that they had a clear understanding of all young people's plans within education, including their progress and revision guides. There were no plans for young people who refused to attend education. While the home has taken some action through speaking with the head of the virtual school and arranging meetings to address the concerns, the daily routine of the home is disorganised and does not actively encourage educational attendance. Therefore, young people are not achieving educationally to the best of their abilities. Some staff are proactive in engaging with young people during the day but some young people stay in bed until late in the morning and staff do not robustly encourage them to engage in their education or activities; this is not conducive to effective learning. Young people do not have access to a computer within the home to support their education and learning. The inspector discussed this with the registered manager, who reported that a computer would be made available for all young people. Young people's health and well-being is promoted in the home, and their individual health needs are being addressed. Staff spend time talking to young people about their health and general well-being and provide support to attend all appointments, such as dental appointments and optician. Young people's inclusion in community life is good. Some young people are active members of a local gym. This provides opportunities for socialising outside of the residential group. These experiences, which are bespoke to individual young people's preferences, add to their overall feeling of well-being and increase their self-esteem.	

Young people have been fully supported to develop and maintain family contact and friendships. The staff have been proactive in their approach and have re-established links with family members. Staff fully understand how important it is for young people to keep in contact with their family. They ensure that safe and suitable arrangements are in place for young people who live a distance from their family to maintain contact and sustain important relationships. This allows young people to maintain their sense of belonging within their family.

Opportunities to undertake shared activities and experiences with staff are encouraged, from days out at the beach to shared meals out. This approach benefits young people when they experience difficulties in their lives, as they have trusted adults whom they can talk to. Young people said that they feel supported by staff and reported that they could speak to staff if there was something upsetting them.

The home is maintained to a good standard. Staff encourage young people to personalise their bedrooms and they are involved in decisions about the decoration of communal areas. A young person commented, 'I like the house because it doesn't feel like a children's home, it just feels like home.' However, the fence adjoining the neighbour's garden is damaged and is in need of repair. This detracts from the homely atmosphere in the home.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The practice in relation to helping and protecting young people needs to improve and, while there is nothing to show that this has led to young people suffering harm, unchecked it has the potential to do so. Young people said that they feel safe at the home and that they can identify someone whom they can talk to. Placing authority social workers said that they are confident in the staff team's ability to keep young people safe. A social worker commented, 'It is very early days. However, I have been impressed with their level of planning, for example the planning was very good for my young person being accommodated in the home.' Risk assessments for young people have not been maintained, or regularly updated, to include all current risks. Additionally, they do not provide staff with strategies on how to manage assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. For example, the absence of comprehensive risk assessments in relation to self-harming behaviour means that staff are not equipped with strategies to help and support young people.	

There are clear individual protocols in place for staff to follow in the event that young people are missing from the home or absent without permission. Young people, their parents and placing authorities are very clear that these strategies have led to a reduction in incidents.

Staff use sanctions and rewards constructively. For instance, young people record their views about any sanctions and whether they think that the sanction is fair. Where sanctions are used, they are fair and proportionate. A young person commented, 'It's fair when you do something wrong – it's your fault, so you should pay for it.' However, the recording of measures of restraint is poor. For example, a staff member had recorded on an incident sheet that they had 'grabbed hold' of a young person. This incident was not recorded as a physical intervention. This meant that managers were unable to evaluate effectively whether the measure of control used was appropriate, proportionate and safe. Additionally, young people and staff had not had the opportunity to be debriefed after the incident. The failure of staff to follow robust physical intervention procedures places young people at risk of harm.

Medication, where used, is safely stored and carefully administered. Detailed records of medication are routinely checked for accuracy. This ensures that any errors are quickly identified and promptly resolved.

Managers use safe recruitment practices to ensure that young people are protected, and that all staff at the home are suitable and safe to work with young people. Young people live in a physically safe environment where the manager ensures that all routine checks, risk assessments, and safety policies and procedures are rigorously adhered to.

Young people understand how to make a complaint if they wish to do so. They rarely complain because they feel that their views are listened to and taken account of on a daily basis. A young person said, 'I have made a complaint and the manager dealt with it.'

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The home is managed by a suitably experienced and qualified manager who has a Level 4 qualification in leadership and management. He is suitably supported by a deputy manager who uses her experience and knowledge to encourage the staff team. A staff commented, 'The managers are always there for us,' and 'I feel very much supported in my role.'	

The home's statement of purpose requires updating. It currently does not clearly identify the home's aims and objectives. When this is updated, it will provide placing social workers, parents and carers with full information about the home's ethos and objectives.

Staffing levels are good, and rotas clearly show the management arrangements that are in place on a daily basis. The staff team speaks positively of the support that it receives from management at the home. However, the inspection identified that formal supervision has not taken place at regular intervals for staff and managers. This does not provide sufficient opportunity to review whether, or how, staff are contributing to young people achieving improved outcomes.

There is a training matrix in place that shows individual staff members' completed training and gives an overview of further training needs. However, staff had not received training in self-harm, despite some young people displaying self-harming behaviour. Managers do not test staff knowledge after staff complete training. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that staff have embedded the learning and therefore have the knowledge and skills to meet the individual needs of the young people. Furthermore, this lack of management action and overview of staff training needs has a direct impact on the care and support provided to young people.

Team meetings take place regularly. This allows staff team members to discuss the running of the home and to look at ways to improve the service that they offer. Staff also use this time to reflect on young people's progress and to decide how best to support young people to reduce risks such as self-harm.

Significant events involving young people resident in the home have not been reported to Ofsted. A failure to share information with all relevant people potentially compromises the safety and welfare of young people. Furthermore, the regulator is unable to carry out its monitoring function to ensure that all appropriate action is being taken by the provider to safeguard young people. This lack of rigour has not helped the home to sufficiently protect young people and maintain good enough standards of care. More robust systems are needed to ensure that the safety and well-being of young people is promoted at all times.

On some occasions, records about individual young people were not always recorded in a non-stigmatising way. This is not helpful to the young person, especially if they want to read their paperwork. Staff had not considered how this could affect young people reading their files. There were also instances where some of the home's records had not been dated. This made it difficult to ascertain when changes had occurred, for example, on incident sheets. While this did not impact directly on the care of young people, it presents difficulties to the manager in auditing and reviewing young people's care records.

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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