

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	23/09/2015
Unique reference number	SC062288
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Educare Adolescent Services Limited
Registered person address	Venture House, 12 Prospect Business Park, Longford Road, CANNOCK, Staffordshire, WS11 0LG

Responsible individual	Matthew Fisher
Manager	Vacant
Inspector	Louise Whittle

Inspection date	23/09/2015
Previous inspection judgement	sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	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

SC062288

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Staffing levels have not been sufficient, resulting in excessive use of agency staff and staff from other homes in the service.
- Young people have been admitted to the home following inadequate and unsafe admission and risk assessments.
- Young people have not made progress in their independence and education due to the instability of staffing and management in the home.
- Staff have not fully addressed the identity needs of young people.
- A significant number of changes of registered manager has led to low staff morale, poor quality staff supervision and failure to consult with young people, parents, staff and other professionals.
- Some staff are not up to date with safeguarding and first aid training.
- Young people have been bullied because of a failure by staff to implement the bullying policy.
- The registered manager has not challenged local authorities sufficiently with regard to young people's lack of education provision.
- Young people's care plans and have not been followed and risk assessments have not always been updated.
- The proximity of the house to a main road with significant issues of poor visibility and access, compromises the safety of young people and staff.
- The tired decor and poor maintenance of the home mean that it is not very homely and welcoming.

The children's home strengths

- Since the appointment of a new manager in June 2015, feedback from professionals and staff indicate that she is making positive changes and lifting staff morale.
- A new deputy manager is enthusiastic, committed, and is able to provide the manager with support; this is a positive development. The new management team has increased capacity to meet the required improvements.
- Dedicated and committed staff provide young people with emotional warmth. They endeavour to meet their needs within the limitations of the staffing levels and changes of management they have experienced.
- Young people demonstrate positive and trusting relationships with the staff who have been consistently there for them.
- Staff actively support young to engage in work experience as well as in a range of leisure activities.
- Young people talk positively about living here and they feel listened to.

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
6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, with particular reference to young people's diversity needs and the decor and maintenance of the home, the registered person must ensure that: (1) children receive care from staff who- (a) understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seek to achieve for children; (b) use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. (iv) provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking into account the child's background. (vi) help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new place or to live independently as an adult. (c) ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to- (i) meet the needs of each child; and (ii) enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home.	30/10/2015
7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard the registered person must: (2)(a) ensure that staff- (i) ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they consider to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare (ii) help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; (iii) help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child;	30/10/2015

(iv) regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care.	
11: The positive relationships standard: In order to meet the positive relationships standard the registered person must ensure: (a) that staff- (ii) help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; (iii) encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour , in accordance with the child's age and understanding; (iv) help each child to develop and practice skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; (v)communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding. (xii) understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and (xiii) have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how the deal with them	30/10/2015
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard and with particular reference to assessing the impact of admission of young people upon those already resident, the safety of the location of the home on a busy main road and conducting a night-time fire drill, the registered person must ensure: (a) that staff- (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm taking into account the information in the child's relevant plans; and if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (ii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm (c) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded (that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly).	30/10/2015
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must ensure that: (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (d) the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;	30/10/2015

(e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care for each child; (f) understand the impact the quality of care provided within 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. (g) demonstrate that the practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on- (ii) feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided by the home.	
14: The care planning standard (1) The care planning standard is that children receive well-planned care from the home and have a positive experience of admission and transition processes. (20 in particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure (a) that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care, as set out in the homes statement of purpose; (c) that each child's relevant plans are followed (e) that the child's placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child's relevant plans is requested, when- (i) the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet his or her needs.	30/10/2015
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met In order to meet the engaging with the wider system standard and with particular reference to ensuring that young people receive the educational provision they require the registered person must: (a) seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs (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 relevant plans.	30/10/2015
45: The registered person must ensure the system for reviewing	30/10/2015

of quality of care undertaken by the registered provider provides for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45(5))	
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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 that staff act as champions for their children, expecting nothing less than a good parent would. The registered person should consider the use of an independent advocate (paragraph 4.16) if the child's needs are not being met. This relates specifically to ensuring that there is immediate challenge and escalation to the local authority where education is not being provided for a child (the Guide to the Quality Standards, page 12, paragraph 2.8)
- Ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of the information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child.(The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The home's record of events must include a description of the action taken and the outcome of any resulting investigation. Following a notifiable event under regulation 40 the home should contact the placing authority to discuss the need for further action. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 63, paragraph 14.14)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is part of a large organisation operated by a private company. The home provides care for up to three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or a learning disability.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/03/2015	CH - Interim	Sustained effectiveness
07/08/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
10/03/2014	CH - Interim	Satisfactory progress
23/01/2014	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	requires improvement
Whilst the house is clean and comfortable, it is in need of refurbishment and redecorating to make it more welcoming, homely and cared for. There are no photographs of young people and staff in the communal areas, giving it an unnecessary institutional feel. Over one seven-month period, 37 staff, including permanent, agency staff, and staff from other homes in the organisation, undertook shifts at the home. Young people have not known who will be caring for them from day to day. The large number of different staff has stopped them benefitting from positive and supportive relationships with the staff they do know. Staff and childcare professionals acknowledge that this has led to young people feeling unsettled and let down, and that it has had a negative impact on their behaviour. The registered person has not planned or ensured that staff deliver care to meet the specified aims of young people's placements. Staff have not recognised the significance of life story material and ethnicity, so they have not fully supported young people's identity needs. Young people have been bullied by their peers, because staff have not implemented the anti-bullying policy. The lack of consistency of staffing arrangements has meant that staff have not been supported to fully address these issues. Staff efforts in other areas of young people's need has also been inconsistent. For example: they did not undertake work with a young person to support his plan for independence, and whilst they tried to work with another young person who requires a specialist educational provision, their success has been limited. In March, the placing local authority for one young person identified the need for a residential special school. This plan has still not been put into place for him and there has been no challenge to the local authority or escalation by the manager on his behalf. Young people say that they are comfortable and well cared for and they are able to personalise their rooms and have input into choosing daily menus. They enjoy using the games room and have warm positive relationships with their key workers. They enjoy activities, such as football and swimming with staff who are keen to encourage them to keep active. They feel that their key workers listen to them. The parent of one young person commented: 'They are good and look after him well- they are all lovely, they keep him safe. They help him to make progress and he has come on leaps and bounds since he has been there. They are very	

good at contacting me- I meet up with them when he has contact and we all get on great. I wish he could stay there as he is settled and they are very good with him. The majority of the time he is very happy there. He loves his farm work.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
Staff have kept young people safe and helped them to understand how to keep themselves safe. Professionals confirm that when a young person goes missing, the staff follow the correct procedures and protocols and keep them informed. However, frequent changes of staff have potentially compromised safety as they are unfamiliar with the young people's behaviour. One young person has become increasingly violent and has physically assaulted staff with no apparent triggers. This has led to some staff leaving, raising questions about the sufficiency of their training and support systems. The registered person has made unsafe decisions about young people moving in and out of the home. They failed to properly take account of the known heightened risk of child sexual exploitation by existing young people within the home, for one new admission. Staff were not sufficiently skilled or experienced to protect the young people, and the local authority was not immediately made aware of the situation. This poor decision making resulted in a further unplanned move a few days later to another home in order to keep one young person safe. No evidence has been provided of return home interviews being arranged for young people following missing from care incidents. Staff and the manager have not challenged the local authorities about these omissions, thereby failing to support young people or to obtain the information necessary to update risk assessments and help prevent further incidents. Some staff members' training in first aid, health and safety, and safeguarding is out of date and there has been no night-time fire drill for the past 12 months. The home's locality assessments highlights the risk associated with the main road, but no action has been taken to address this and one young person stated that he feels unsafe with the lack of a clear boundary between the house and road.	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
The changes in management since the last inspection have been very damaging to young people. The last registered manager left at the end of January 2015 and the current manager came into post in early June. This has also resulted in low staff morale, which has affected the quality of the service provided. Poor management has prevented the highly experienced, qualified and skilled staff team employed at the home from working effectively and consistently with young people. This included failing to ensure that they received updated first aid and safeguarding training, leaving both young people and staff vulnerable. There has been a lack of managerial consultation with children, young people, parents and professionals in order to develop the service and drive up standards. Young people's meetings have taken place once a month at most, instead of weekly, and minutes have been absent or lacking in detail. There are no records of feedback from parents or professionals and staff meetings have been poorly attended and recorded. Consequently, this valuable input has not been available to the manager when reviewing the quality of care provided by the service. Administrative systems have changed with each manager, leading to staff often being unclear about where to access the information they need to work effectively with young people. The quality of notifications, record keeping, supervision and feedback to young people has been poor, raising training and support issues. There has been inconsistency in care plans being followed, updating of risk assessments after serious incidents and key workers have not addressed significant issues of safety and behaviour with young people. Managers have failed to consistently review and sign individual young people's risk assessments. The new manager, who has applied to become the registered manager, came into post three months ago and staff and professionals say that communication has improved since the manager arrived. A deputy manager began in post on the day of the inspection. Both present as being skilled, committed and fully aware of the deficits in the care provided to young people. One childcare professional confirmed that: 'the manager has started to work with staff about how they work with the young person and manage his behaviour. Staff shortages and use of agency have made it difficult for her.' The new manager has undertaken an audit of the home and has an action plan, which she is addressing. However, staff shortages have compromised her ability to tackle these issues, because she has had to cover shifts, in addition to managing this home and another home. Changes to this home are not yet embedded. The managerial demands are such that they require the full-time attention of a manager who can address the range of significant issues currently compromising the young people's quality of care.	

The requirements of the previous Ofsted inspection have not been fully met. There is still a lack of consistent managerial review of physical intervention records. Consequently, young people cannot be assured that the physical interventions they experience are safe and appropriate. Also, the manager has not challenged the independent visitor to ensure that the parents of young people and staff are spoken to during visits. The quality of the independent visits is sometimes poor and do not guarantee that the concerns of young people and staff are identified.

The recent appointment of the deputy manager is essential to the manager's ability to instigate the improvements necessary to meet young people's needs to a good standard. Although the capacity of the management team to make the necessary changes has improved, the impact of the instability of past two years is far reaching and cannot be underestimated. Support by the registered provider is now key to meeting the required improvements within the timescales.

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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