

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	08/09/2015
Unique reference number	SC065189
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Meadows Care Limited
Registered person address	Meadows Care Ltd, Egerton House, Wardle Road, ROCHDALE, Lancashire, OL12 9EN

Responsible individual	Mr Niel Shelmerdine
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Stella Lovie

Inspection date	08/09/2015
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	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC065189

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people have positive bonds with experienced, motivated, well-supported staff who care about them and act as influential role models. This helps them to aspire and improve their life chances.
- Young people are able to build trusted and secure relationships with adults working at the home. They live in stable environments with consistency in their lives. Staff, who know the young people well, develop positive relationships with them, protect them and promote their welfare.
- Overall, young people make positive, sustained progress in education, health and behaviour in response to the high standard of care they receive.
- The premises provide a safe and stimulating environment in high-quality buildings, with spaces that support nurture and allow privacy as well as common spaces and excellent recreational facilities.
- Effective risk assessment and good working together with other agencies ensures that young people are appropriately safeguarded.
- The manager has addressed all the requirements and recommendations from the last inspection when the home had declined in effectiveness. This demonstrates effective management, willingness to learn from inspection activity and a concerted drive to get back to the home's previous outstanding status.
- Monitoring of young people's progress and development is thorough and the manager has a sound understanding of the strengths of the home and areas for development. However the following shortfalls require attention: better working with the wider systems to secure essential services for young people; some re-decorating and refurbishing of parts of the home; ensuring that the manager is properly supported by a permanent deputy manager; and keeping young people's records compliant with regulation. None of these shortfalls have had a significant impact on young people's welfare or safety. Two recommendations are also made to further improve practice.

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: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met: In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff- (b) seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs. This is with specific regard to obtaining return interviews and mental health services appointments when needed.	10/11/2015
6: The quality and purpose of care standard: The quality and purpose of care standard requires the registered person to- (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. This is with specific regard to refreshing the equipment in the child's ensuite bathroom, and to painting the second child's bedroom in neutral colours.	10/11/2015
13: The leadership and management standard: The leadership and management standard requires the registered person to- (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. This is with specific regard to ensuring the appointment of a full time, permanent person to the post of deputy manager.	10/12/2015
36: Children's case records: The registered person must maintain records for each child which include the information listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; this is with specific regard to recording the ethnicity of each child. (Regulation 36 (1) (a))	10/10/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff establish the child's understanding of key information about living in the home; with specific regard to provision of up-to-date child-friendly placement plans (Guide, page 57, paragraph 11.8)
- ensure that staff appraisals take into account the views of children in the home's care. (Guide, page 61, paragraph 13.5)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is one of a number of children's homes operated by a private company. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/02/2015	CH - Interim	declined in effectiveness
07/10/2014	CH - Full	Outstanding
22/01/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
30/05/2013	CH - Full	Outstanding

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Relationships between staff and young people ensure that young people feel safe and cared for. Staff members are understanding, sympathetic, comforting and consistent, and pay individual attention to each young person living in the home. This helps to promote young people's sense of well-being and belonging, and gives them good opportunities to form and develop appropriate attachments and trust. As one young person's parent confirmed: 'I would just like to thank all the staff at Meadows for all the love and support you have given my daughter over the last 17 weeks. You became a new family to her and a support and family to me.' Young people are confident in expressing their views and understand that their opinions are taken into account and, therefore, positively influence how the home is run. For example, young people make choices about how they wish to individualise their own personal space, the activities they wish to pursue and the meal options provided within the home. Young people's needs are the focus of staff attention. As a result, young people are making positive progress with a range of personal issues such as personal hygiene, deferred gratification and learning how to make appropriate attachments. For some young people, this means that they are better able to overcome setbacks, and absorb and process information more constructively. Staff actively pursue referrals to get the right kind of support for young people's challenging behaviours in relation to matters such as drugs awareness and fire safety. As one social worker commented: 'My young person has been very happy in that home. He's made a lot of progress in respect of his health and education. They are really meeting his needs.' Staff are fully involved in young people's personal education plans and carefully track their educational progress. They facilitate young people's attendance and prompt arrival at their designated educational placements. They attend all education meetings as appropriate. They act as advocates for the young people and undertake all home-based tasks agreed in individual education plans. Regular home-school liaison promotes consistency of approach and fosters positive relationships among all working partners. As one education professional confirmed: 'We have excellent school-home liaison. We are in frequent contact, including during the school holidays. They keep me informed every step of the way. Staff are very proactive at encouraging him to come in. He is making progress and has achieved his targets. The last two terms his attendance has been very good.'	

The standard of placement plans is good and they reflect the individuality of young people. Staff encourage young people to work on these plans and targets through sessions based around problem solving, goal setting and task-centred activities. They try to understand situations from the young person's point of view and work with them to find solutions and choices. They help young people to understand their own and other's emotions. It helps young people to comprehend that other people are separate to them and think and feel differently. This promotes their capacity for empathy. It also helps to keep young people involved with their care planning and promotes personal responsibility. That said, the young people-friendly placement plans need up-dating in order to reflect their current situations in line with their more up-to-date, formal placement plans.

Case records demonstrate the work that is undertaken with young people and clearly relate to the plans for their futures. The style and clarity of records enhances the understanding that young people have about their histories, background and experiences. However, case files did not always clearly state the ethnicity of young people in breach of regulation, though there is no indication that this has impacted adversely on any aspect of their care.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The home makes good provision for safeguarding young people's welfare. Everyone involved in supporting them plays a role in ensuring young people stay protected from harm. Staff are confident in all areas of child protection and have the necessary knowledge and skills to keep young people safe. Strong links with other agencies give staff access to up-to-date advice and guidance so that everyday practice puts young people's welfare first. The local police support officers play an active role in educating young people about how to keep safe. This includes undertaking joint restorative work with young people in order to avoid criminalising them, yet enabling them to reflect on their behaviour, understand its impact on others and make appropriate amends. That positive working together has also involved the police attending meetings with the young people to discuss locality risk issues and advise on how to keep themselves safe. The police are consequently very positive about their partnership with the home: 'The manager is	

always happy to assist police, and is happy to be part of a joint approach in order to tackle the issues. The manager shares intelligence with us and facilitates the video interviews, submissions of phones and tablets and is willing to attend strategy meetings. He is very pro-active in assisting the police, very accommodating to our needs and he fully understands the meaning of Operation Madison. Further to this, I am aware that when a young person goes missing, the team will be pro-active in making efforts to locate that person, and glean any information from them.'

Risk assessments are thorough, insightful and highly individualised. They reflect the diverse needs and personalities of each of the young people. They provide a comprehensive overview of identified behaviours, triggers, warning signs and control measures. Staff are skilled at discussing with young people their areas of risk, behaviour, responsibilities and how these are to be managed. When young people have gone missing, staff go out on to the streets and known addresses to look for them. These incidents have been responded to promptly. Overall, they are reducing in frequency. The manager reviews strategies to minimise such risks but has not always ensured that placing authorities arrange for young people to be interviewed by an independent person when they return from being missing. This reduces opportunities to understand why young people went missing and to help them to understand that they have options and provide them with information on how to stay safe if they run away again.

Where there have been known sexual exploitation risks, staff have used structured screening tools with expert advice to understand the level of risk and take effective safeguarding action. This has included referral to specialist services for support, and provision of additional staff as needed. Strategy discussions and meetings are used routinely. They usually involve a wide range of relevant agencies and the quality of information-sharing is of a high standard. This meant that the possible child protection risks are explored in a formal multi-agency forum and that prompt and coordinated actions are agreed at an early point. Staff demonstrate good awareness of the key indicators of sexual exploitation and know what to do if they have concerns. They collaborate effectively with external agencies to educate vulnerable young people to protect themselves from exploitation and to bring about the prosecution of perpetrators of sexual exploitation. They undertake high quality direct work with young people to help them to recognise the dangers so that they can make safer choices. Where such risks can no longer be managed safely in the home, the manager works effectively with placing authorities to consider alternative plans.

Staff maintain a good focus on encouraging young people to take responsibility for their own behaviour in a way that is appropriate to their age and understanding. Sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair. They are understood by all staff and young people. These behaviour modification approaches, combined with positive relationships between staff and young people, help to significantly moderate anti-social and inappropriate behaviour.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
Since the last full inspection the home has a new manager in post. He has applied to be the Registered Manager and has started his appropriate leadership and management qualification. He has good support from senior managers to help him meet all the demands of the role. He was very new to the post at the point of the interim inspection in February 2015 when the home was judged to have declined in effectiveness from its previous sustained record of being outstanding. The manager took on board the lessons from that inspection, addressed all the requirements and recommendations to improve practice, and has increased in confidence and competency as a result. Unfortunately, he has not been well-served by the deputy manager role in this home as up until very recently there has been a succession of temporary deputy managers. This is a significant matter as the manager covers two homes and is reliant on a stable, secure deputy manager to facilitate his day-to-day control of the home. That said, the manager is supported by a strong senior member of staff on the team, and the provider has very recently employed someone to take up the deputy manager role, albeit technically still on a temporary basis as they are covering a maternity leave situation. This has helped to minimise any adverse impact. The manager presents as a nurturing and kind person who always places the needs of the young people first. As one young person commented: 'You're the manager of the home and I gotta say a pretty good one! You are a really nice, caring man and you are always willing to listen to me when I want to talk.' Staff are very supportive of each other and want to improve things all the time. They feel that they are valued in the role that they play. In turn, young people are cared for in a consistent manner by staff who enjoy their work and provide young people with a consistency of approach. This helps vulnerable young people be confident in the responses that they get, and reduces their anxieties. Staff receive regular supervision which they report supports and challenges them to do as good a job as possible. For example, they comment that the support they receive helps them to manage their own emotions in relation to young people's traumatic behaviour. This ensures that staff are better able to cope with the management of young people's distress. Performance is taken seriously and is reviewed through annual appraisal. Under performance is tackled robustly by the manager being honest about people's weaknesses and dealing with them early on. However, appraisals fail to take young people's views into account and this misses an important source of information to evaluate staff performance.	

The provider promotes a culture of learning and continuous improvement by offering a wealth of training. The training programme is designed and organised to meet the on-going learning needs of the staff group, and to understand the specific needs of particular young people living in the home. For example, staff have welcomed training in drugs awareness and sexual exploitation. One member of staff commented: 'They are really good, informative courses, make me think and help me to do the job.' Another member of staff said that the sexual exploitation training had really opened his eyes by showing the step by step manipulation of a young person. He felt this training had helped him to spot things he may not have been aware of before.

The statement of purpose is kept under regular review and the aims of the provision are clearly stated both for parents and young people, and are effectively translated into practice. The home is very comfortable and provides young people with excellent recreational facilities. This has encouraged young people to bring friends back to the house for relaxed and pleasant evenings. However, a couple of areas in the home require some re-decoration, and new fixtures and fittings to bring them up to the otherwise high standard of the rest of the home.

Monitoring arrangements, including the monthly independent visitor reports, provide robust scrutiny of practice and performance of the home. They identify areas for improvement. The manager regularly monitors, reviews and tracks the progress of individual young people to assess the quality of the service and their experiences. Views of young people inform this process. The results of that monitoring drive continuous improvement in outcomes for young people and service provision. It provides an effective check for compliance with regulations and quality standards, ensuring that young people's needs are central to proceedings and they are safely cared for at all times.

The manager makes and sustains good relationships with partner agencies. This helps to secure positive outcomes for young people. However, there have been occasions when the manager needed to be more assertive with partner agencies in the wider system in order to obtain essential services for young people such as timely mental health provision.

The manager makes child-centred decisions about admissions. Priority is given to the safety and stability of the group environment and new admissions take account of all the young people's needs and the likely impact of a new young person joining the young person already in the home. This helps to ensure that needs are compatible and promotes stability of placements.

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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