

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	10 May 2016
Unique reference number	SC065189
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Meadows Care Ltd
Registered person address	Meadows Care Ltd, Egerton House, Wardle Road, Rochdale OL12 9EN

Responsible individual	Niel Shelmerdine
Registered manager	Stuart Roberts
Inspector	Rebecca Quested

Inspection date	10 May 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Declined in 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

SC065189

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Young people do not receive consistent care. Shortfalls in staffing lead to numerous temporary staff working in the home.
- The registered manager does not ensure that essential information is maintained about who is working in the home, such as complete rotas, which reflect who works in the home, and a staff register.
- The registered manager does not ensure that all staff have the necessary qualifications and skills to work in the home.
- Young people do not live in a stable environment where boundaries are maintained. Some temporary staff do not follow risk assessments, leading to an escalation in young people's behaviour. As a result, staff are harmed and property is damaged.
- Staff do not ensure that young people benefit from 'return' interviews each time they go missing, as they do not understand the need for these to take place.
- Staff do not always record the incidents when restraint has been used. The registered manager's review of incidents does not identify staff's shortfall in recording this.
- The registered manager does not monitor and review the quality of care effectively. He does not ensure that he responds effectively to all the recommendations made by the independent visitor or to the regulatory requirements identified during inspection.
- The registered manager's review of the location risk assessment does not evidence consultation with relevant people and the impact of local services on the care that the home provides.
- Staff notify Ofsted of serious incidents within the home, yet this is not in a timely manner.

The children's home strengths

- Some staff develop positive relationships with young people, who are able to talk to them about what is difficult.
- The registered manager provides formal and informal support to the core staff team, which provides them with resilience to manage young people's challenging behaviour.
- Staff always follow young people when they go missing. They look for them and work effectively with the police and families to minimise the amount of time that they are at risk.
- Staff ensure that young people's welfare remains paramount when placements end. They remain in contact with young people, offering them a sense of security.
- The registered manager advocates tirelessly on behalf of young people to ensure that their wishes are central to their care.

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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered provider must ensure that: (2) (a)(i) staff assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; with specific regard to implementing independent return interviews on each occasion a young person goes missing.	17 June 2016
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must ensure that the registered person: (2) (f) understands 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; and h) uses monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	17 June 2016
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must ensure that the: (2) (e) home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child.	17 June 2016

13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must ensure that the: 2. (c) staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.	17 June 2016
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must ensure that the: 2.(b) staff work as a team where appropriate.	17 June 2016
The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relations to a child in the home, a record is made which includes the name of the child, details of the behaviour leading to the use of the measure, the date, time and location of the use of the measure, a description of the measure and its duration, details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure, the name of the person who used the measure and any other person present, the effectiveness of the measure and a description of any injury to the child or other person and any medical treatment administered. The registered person must ensure within 48 hours of the use of the measure that the user is spoken to about the measure and the registered person signed the record to confirm it is accurate. Within 5 days of the use of the measure the registered person must add to the record confirmation that that they have spoken to the child about the measure (Regulation 35 (3)).	17 June 2016
The registered person must maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4 and ensure that the records are kept up to date (Regulation 37 (2)(a)–(b)).	17 June 2016
The registered provider must notify HMCI without delay of any incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious (Regulation 40(4)).	17 June 2016
The registered provider must review the appropriateness and	17 June 2016

suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person (Regulation 46 (1–2)).	
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Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care for two children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home forms part of a large social care company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22 February 2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
8 September 2015	Full	Good
6 February 2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
7 October 2014	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
The period since the last inspection has been characterised by instability in the care provided for young people. One young person has been admitted to the home and one has left. The core staff team endeavours to develop positive relationships with young people. They try hard to engage with those who are resistant to investing in the home because they are either moving on or do not want to be in the home. Some staff are able to develop positive relationships with young people, who are able to talk to them about what is difficult. Young people do not receive consistent care. The shortfalls in the core staff team lead to numerous temporary staff working in the home. This results in a downwards spiral in young people's behaviour and further staffing deficits, as staff who are harmed by young people are unable to work in the home. This leads to a further decline in young people's behaviour. Staff do not always work effectively as a team. Some staff do not follow risk assessments to manage young people's behaviour. Some staff do not follow advice from the placing authority about how to manage contact with previous placements. This occurs due to inconsistencies in staffing. Some staff develop positive relationships with young people. Staff are interested in young people and their lives. They support young people's contact with their families where this is safe and in their interests, even when young people are placed a long way from home. A placing social worker said: 'I felt that staff were always ready to promote contact between my young person and their birth family. Staff ensured that they attended contact... they were always willing to travel long distances with my young person to see their family.' This ensures that each young person's identity is promoted. Some young people engage well with education provided within the home. They are supported to re-engage with education and to understand how important this is for their life chances. They are well motivated to catch up on education that they have missed in order to take their GCSEs this summer. Other young people remain	

disengaged from education, despite staff's efforts.

Staff offer young people opportunities to engage with activities within the local community with limited success. Staff promote independence skills for young people so that they are well prepared for adult life. Some young people engage well and are able to manage tasks confidently, such as cooking, cleaning, doing their laundry and maintaining their personal hygiene. Other young people refuse to engage in developing these skills.

Young people receive therapeutic intervention from company therapists, who help young people to develop strategies to manage their emotions. At times, young people are able to use these strategies although, increasingly, they struggle to manage their difficult feelings. Young people cause damage to the home, which is currently being rectified. This means that the home does not present as a homely environment.

Staff welcome young people into the home on their arrival and learn quickly about their experiences. Young people know how to complain, and do so when their bedroom is not clean on their arrival. The registered manager listens carefully to young people and learns from their complaints.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Staff attempt to promote positive behaviour with limited success, as young people do not engage with the reward systems they introduce. Staff develop detailed risk assessments which describe how to manage young people's behaviour. However, not all staff consistently follow these, resulting in boundaries not being reliably maintained. Young people are able to identify who is not aware of how to manage them. This results in repeated incidents of challenging behaviour which staff are unable to manage safely. Staff are harmed during these incidents, and young people allege that they have been harmed. Some staff are unable to return to work in the home, and this leads to further staff shortfalls which need to be covered by temporary staff. Some staff are skilled in de-escalation techniques. Consequently, physical intervention is used infrequently. Some staff record the details well, but other staff restrain young people without recognising that restraint is being used and	

recording this. Consequently, the registered manager reviews incidents and does not recognise this either. When this occurs, the use of restraint is not evaluated by the registered manager for effectiveness, and the young person and the staff member are not offered an opportunity to reflect on the use of physical intervention.

Staff develop positive relationships with the police. This which results in a coordinated response when young people are missing. Staff follow young people when they go missing and look for them in known places. They develop links with previous placements and homes within the organisation when young people go missing with friends. This means that young people are missing for the minimum amount of time.

Staff's recording of missing incidents is good, at times. On other occasions it is unclear whether the young person is missing or absent. Staff record that 'return' interviews are 'not applicable', without understanding the statutory requirement for these to take place ('Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care', Department of Education, January 2014). As a result, 'return' interviews do not take place following each occasion that the young person is missing. At times, the young person is missing again when an independent person comes to see them. Young people do not benefit from having their views incorporated into plans to safeguard them from further 'missing' incidents. There is some evidence that the registered manager is addressing this by seeking the placing authority's agreement to use a charitable organisation to provide an independent person to conduct 'return from missing' interviews.

Staff understand the risks associated with substance misuse and sexual exploitation. They put plans in place to reduce harm and to minimise risks, for example through referring young people to substance misuse services and using risk evaluation tools to understand the risks for them of sexual exploitation. They keep these under review and organise planning meetings when young people say they do not feel safe.

Young people understand how to complain, and the registered manager ensures that issues are effectively resolved. There are good links with the local designated officer and referrals are made, although these are not always in a timely manner.

The registered manager ensures that permanent staff are recruited by using appropriate vetting processes. This prevents unsafe adults from having access to young people.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The registered manager has been in post for a year. He has worked in residential childcare for six years and holds a level 3 qualification in residential childcare. He is currently working towards a relevant level 5 qualification in leadership and management in residential childcare. He ensures that the home is run in accordance with the statement of purpose to provide nurturing care. The registered manager has made some progress in addressing the shortfalls identified at the last inspection. He ensures that he both receives adequate information and considers the risks associated with new young people joining the home. He ensures that a fire drill takes place within a week of their placement and that services are in place to meet the new young person's needs. However, other deficits are not addressed. Young people do not benefit from 'return' interviews each time they return from going missing. This represents lost opportunities to understand young people's 'missing' behaviour to inform strategic planning. The registered manager neither robustly addresses the recommendations identified by the independent visitor to improve the quality of care, nor has an effective system in place to ensure that reviews of care lead to improvements. For example, documents which inform staff's care of young people have not been updated for two months, when changes have occurred in their care regarding them having free time away from the home. Young people's progress plans are reviewed with the same goals, even though no progress has been made. Since the last inspection, the staff team has been through a number of changes. Shortfalls in staffing have led to numerous temporary staff working in the home. The registered manager has not ensured that the relevant information about them is held in the home. The staff rota does not reflect who has worked in the home, and young people have destroyed two months' rotas. This represents safeguarding concerns, as it is unclear who has worked in the home. The registered manager has not ensured that all staff are appropriately qualified and skilled to work in the home. Some staff have not received the relevant training in behaviour management and restraint, and other staff do not implement risk assessments or support core staff members in providing consistency and	

boundaries. Young people's behaviour escalates as a result, leading to significant harm to staff and damage to the home. Young people do not benefit from reliable and stable care.

The registered manager and staff work proactively with other agencies and families to promote young people's welfare. They have developed positive relationships which ensure that information is shared effectively with school, therapists and the police. The registered manager advocates strongly on behalf of young people. He maintains pressure, where this is necessary, to implement young people's care plans.

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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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