

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC065780
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Milestones Care Homes Limited
Registered person address	32 Fieldway Maghull LIVERPOOL L31 5NB

Responsible individual	Stephen Armstrong
Registered manager	Mark Christopher Armstrong
Date of last inspection	11/11/2014

Inspection date	18/03/2015
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Previous inspection	adequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	None

This inspection

This home was judged adequate at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **improved effectiveness**.

The quality of care remains good and outcomes for children and young people are improving. Better safeguarding arrangements are in place, although some shortfalls remain. Monitoring arrangements have improved so the Registered Manager has better systems for ensuring the smooth and effective operation of the home.

Informative and evaluative management reports are shared with the provider and with Ofsted every three months. These provide a good overview of children and young people's experiences and progress. They highlight barriers to children and young people's development and demonstrate they all continue to make good progress, having improved outcomes. Providing management reports regularly to Ofsted ensures the regulator maintains a good overview of the operation of the home and how it is supporting children and young people to make progress.

Monthly independent quality assurance visits and reports provide a good overview of the home's ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. The quality of records is routinely assessed and any shortfalls identified are quickly addressed. Children and young people, their families and placing social workers are invited to speak to the visitor and give their views about the home's performance. These reports are shared with Ofsted each month and illustrate the home supports children and young people very well.

No children and young people have been admitted to or discharged from the home since the last inspection. Clear guidance in the admissions and discharge log book directs those completing the record to make sure they notify the local authority when children and young people move into or out of the authority. This enables the local authority to monitor the arrangements for looked after children from out of authority. In addition, the home shares information about newly admitted children with the police and multi-agency safeguarding hub. This promotes better protection

for vulnerable children and young people.

There have been two revisions to the Statement of Purpose since the last inspection, due to staffing changes in the home. The home has kept Ofsted informed of the changes. This ensures the regulator has up-to-date information about the home and the service it provides.

The improvement in management systems means that the home's records are better maintained and shortfalls noted at the last inspection have been addressed. The Admissions and Discharge book is appropriately completed so it gives accurate information about where children and young people have moved to on leaving this home. This contributes to a clear record of each child and young person's care journey. The record of rotas worked is accurately maintained in the home, showing changes to planned rotas. It demonstrates that the home is suitably staffed.

The provider has replaced the wooden back door that was previously sticking during wet weather, with a new door. In addition, the provider has carried out other improvements to the structure of the house. This ensures children and young people and staff live in a well-maintained home which they can exit quickly through the back door, in the event of an emergency. The home continues to provide a homely, comfortable environment.

A deputy manager has been appointed to the home. She ably assists the Registered Manager is supporting and supervising staff. She is developing skills in monitoring the performance of the home and plans to submit an application to take over the role of Registered Manager in the near future. She takes responsibility for the monthly formal supervision of the staff team and staff report supervision is regular, helpful and promotes improvements in their practice. This enables staff to seek and receive guidance and support within a safe and confidential environment.

There have been eight incidents of children and young people going missing from home since the last inspection. This is a reduction in incidents and demonstrates the home is working effectively with children and young people at risk of going missing, who have significantly reduced this behaviour since living at this home.

Staff safeguard children and young people by keeping in touch with them by phone when they are away from the home, with or without permission. They go looking for children and young people who are late back or who have switched off their phones. They contact children and young people's friends and family to ascertain their whereabouts. They report children missing to the police in line with locally agreed protocols and children and young people's individual risk assessments.

The home has improved the effectiveness of its multi-agency working, in particular, working with the police and an independent safeguarding agency whose role is to support children and young people who regularly go missing from care. As a result, children and young people are routinely interviewed by the police or an independent

person on their return to the home, as well as by staff. Individual young people have built strong relationships with specialist workers who provide weekly safeguarding sessions aimed at educating and protecting those who regularly go missing. This gives them the opportunity to share any concerns they have about the home that have prompted them to go missing, as well as any incidents that compromised their safety and welfare, while missing. Staff use information shared to promote children and young people's future safety. Social workers describe the home's communication with them as 'excellent' and report the home contributes effectively to decision-making and care planning.

Some children and young people continue to make good progress at school, having excellent attendance and achieving predicted grades, in line with peers. One young person said 'I'm doing really well...staff make sure I do my homework.' Others, who have missed significant amounts of education in previous placements, have very much improved their engagement with education and are responding well to the support the home provides. For some, this improvement is not yet sustained sufficiently to ensure good educational outcomes.

The home provides good support to children and young people with highly complex emotional and behavioural needs. Over time, staff develop meaningful, influential relationships with children and young people, who learn to trust them and to listen to their good advice. A placing social worker said, 'Staff have shown commitment and stickability and it's really made a difference.'

Staff know the risks associated with children and young people going missing from care and are well informed about child sexual exploitation and the signs that would cause concern. They work closely with and seek advice as necessary from mental health practitioners, promoting the best possible care for children and young people.

Shortfalls in the staff training programme mean that some staff have not received mandatory training within reasonable timeframes, including in first aid and food hygiene. As a result, the home cannot guarantee there is always a member of staff on duty who is qualified to administer first aid and staff who prepare meals have not been trained in safe food practices.

Recruitment files show that two references are taken up prior to new staff starting work at the home. However, they are taken up by 'phone calls to referees and written references are not always obtained. This means that references, although positive, are not signed by the referee and their validity cannot be verified. The home has not taken sufficient action to address the shortfall in recruitment practice identified at the last inspection. The home's practice is not strong enough to ensure the suitability of new staff.

Information about this children's home

This children's home cares for up to three children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is owned and managed by a private limited company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/11/2014	Full	adequate
21/03/2014	Interim	good progress
20/12/2013	Full	good
10/01/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
26 (2001)	do not employ a person to work at the children's home unless full and satisfactory information is available in relation to him in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2. In particular, ensure you obtain two written references, including a reference from the person's most recent employer, if any (Regulation 26 (3) (d))	30/04/2015
20 (2001)	promote and protect the physical, emotional and mental health of the children accommodated. In particular, ensure that at all times, at least one person on duty at the children's home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 20 (2)(e))	30/04/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a good quality learning and development programme which staff and volunteers are supported to undertake. (NMS 18.1)

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.