

SC065780

Registered provider: Milestones Care Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's' home, registered to accommodate three young people who have emotional and/or behaviour difficulties.

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 May 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 16 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is inadequate because

- Young people's needs have not been met across all aspects of their welfare, particularly their safety, their health and their education.
- Risks to young people are not clearly identified, understood or managed by staff. The failure of staff, including managers, to respond appropriately to potential or actual safeguarding concerns has left children at risk.
- Behaviour management plans are poor. Consequently, behaviours are not consistently challenged by staff to provide young people with a clear understanding of what is acceptable or not.
- Some young people do not have access to a full-time education provision. This impacts on their progress and ability to reach their full potential.
- A failure by staff at the home to secure required care planning documentation from placing authorities means that it is unclear how each young person is to be cared for and how their needs are to be met. This has a detrimental impact on the experiences of all young people living in the home.
- Safer recruitment procedures have not been adhered to and fail to safeguard the young person and minimise any potential risks to them.
- Internal monitoring of the home is ineffective because potential risks are not identified or addressed. In particular, the internal monitoring of the home fails to identify weaknesses in practice, such as those found at this inspection.
- Significant events involving young people have not been reported to Ofsted. This means that the regulator is unable to carry out its monitoring function to ensure that all appropriate action is taken by the provider to safeguard young people.

The children's home's strengths

- Some young people make good progress in their education attainment.
- Some young people enjoy activities away from the home and are members of local clubs.
- There is some evidence of positive relationships between young people and staff.
- The registered manager took immediate action to establish a management response to the shortfalls identified in this report.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/04/2016	Full	Good
21/12/2015	Interim	Not judged
11/08/2015	Full	Inadequate

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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 The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their education potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; and that they help each child who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment. (Regulation 8(1)(2)(a)(v)(ix)) In particular, ensure that education plans are in place for all young people.	03/07/2017
10: The health and well-being standard The health and well-being standard is that the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff help each child to achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans;	03/07/2017

understand the child's health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child's health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding; and understand and develop skills to promote the child's well-being. (Regulation 10(1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i)(ii))(iv)	
12: The protection of children standard * The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act on signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; 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; and that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health.	21/06/2017

(Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(c))	
13: The leadership and management standard The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to 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; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; 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; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(c)(f)(h))	03/07/2017
14: The care planning standard The care planning standard is that the registered person must ensure that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority. (Regulation 14(1)(a)(b)(2)(b))(iii))	03/07/2017

In particular, ensure that independence plans are in place for each young person.	
32: Fitness of workers * The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualifications and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(1)(2)(a)(b)(3)(a)(b)(c)(d))	21/06/2017
40: Notification of a serious event The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child is instigated or	03/07/2017

concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or

there is any other incident relating to a child, which the registered person considers to be serious.

A notification made under this regulation

must include details of the matter, the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified, and any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter;

must be made or confirmed in writing.

(Regulation 40(4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(5)(a)(b))

* These requirements are subject of a compliance notice.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Young people make progress in some areas of their development. However, their overall experience is inadequate because staff do not ensure that they are protected from harm or that they support fully young people's health or education needs. Although all young people could identify one staff member they could talk to if they were upset, and one young person said that she felt, 'safe living in the home', this was not the view of all young people. One young person told the inspector, 'Half the time I am scared in here, but some staff take me into the office when [Name of young person] is kicking off.' However, managers and staff have failed to document this strategy, or review and update the individual risk assessments with the known risks and effective behaviour management plans. Consequently, not all staff provide robust, consistent responses to risky or negative behaviour.

The current standards of care and support provided at this home mean that young people's safety, health, emotional well-being and education needs are not met. The lack of coordinated placement planning to effectively support young people is placing them at significant risk. One young person living in the home does not have an up-to-date local authority care plan in their case records that sets out the specific needs of the young person and the relevant information to inform their support needs. The plan on file in the home relates to a previous foster home. It remains unclear as to what is expected of the home in order to help and support the young person to make progress.

All young people are registered with the appropriate health professionals. However, aspects of young people's health needs are either not identified or, if they are, decisive

action is not taken to manage these. For example, examination of medication records revealed that a young person either refused their prescribed medication or were not at home for days at a time. A sample of one week's medication records showed that in seven days the young person only received two doses of their medication. Staff failed to take any action on this or seek medical advice on the potential adverse effects of sporadic use of this drug. These shortfalls highlight significant gaps by staff in identifying health needs or managing known health risks of young people in this home.

Some young people make good progress in their education attainment. One young person is sitting his GCSEs and is encouraged to attend after-school homework clubs for revision. Another young person is on a college course of her choice and said that she 'loves it'. The third young person is not in education and does not have an up-to-date personal education plan. When young people are not in education, they do not engage in purposeful activity. Insufficient action has been taken to address these concerns to help young people to rebuild their confidence and increase their participation in education. The lack of education plans for individual young people means that the staff at the home do not adequately promote the importance of learning and education for all young people, and this lack of aspiration impacts on young people's learning and future life chances.

Young people do not have transition or independence plans for moving on from the home and into adult life. Staff and managers have failed to recognise that developing young people's independence skills is an important aspect of preparing them for moving on.

On a positive note, some young people have been supported to develop and maintain family contact. This involves staff making sure that safe and suitable arrangements are in place for young people who live a distance from their families. This helps to maintain contact and allows young people to maintain their sense of belonging in their families.

Some young people enjoy membership and attendance at local youth clubs and visits to the cinema. As a result, their confidence increases and they develop a real and positive sense of belonging to the local and wider community.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Safeguarding practice in this home is poor and does not promote the welfare and safety of young people. Staff are not sufficiently aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting young people. Effective action is not always taken in a timely way when there is a serious concern about a young person's welfare. This means that young people are not robustly protected from harm.

Staff do not take action to protect young people when they are alerted to serious safeguarding concerns. For example, during the inspection and in the presence of the inspector, a young person disclosed a significant child protection concern and explained that she had never told anyone this information before. Staff failed to follow the

provider's safeguarding procedures in relation to this and failed to take immediate action to report this child protection concern to the relevant professionals. Despite staff confirming to the inspector that they were aware of safeguarding procedures, they planned to take the young person out 'for coffee and a chat'. However, staff had not considered the seriousness of the allegation and, if they had taken the young person for a coffee and spoken to her about this allegation, this could have compromised any further investigation into this matter due to the failure of not following best evidence protocols.

Robust behaviour management strategies are not in place. As a result, staff do not have agreed, appropriate ways to manage behaviours. For example, a young person's behaviour management plan states, 'Behaviour has often become more challenging when staff become involved in attempting to support or calm her down in the presence of peers. She usually calms quicker if she is spoken to one to one, left alone, or seek[s] support from peers.' The inspector asked a member of staff for clarification about this. It was explained that staff would seek the assistance of another young person living in the home to help 'calm down this young person's behaviours', as this was more effective. The failure of staff to address young people's behaviour is placing all young people at risk of harm, especially when they rely on other young people to manage a young person's behaviour. This was evident during observations of the manager's and staff's practice, during the inspection. Although a young person was in a heightened state of agitation, staff relied on another young person, who at that time was in her college placement, to manage this via numerous telephone conversations. Despite threats of harm and clear evidence of bullying and intimidation being observed, staff failed to manage the situation safely or appropriately protect all young people. This does not demonstrate that staff fully understand their roles in protecting young people.

Furthermore, young people are not supervised during the night. On at least two occasions when staff had retired to their own bedrooms, young people were known to be running in and out of each other's bedrooms and smoking in the garden. In neither instance, had staff sought to intervene to establish whether young people were safe. The staff response to the incidents demonstrates a lack of understanding of the risks involved and fails to show that young people's behaviour is responded to and managed effectively or safely. Furthermore, staff have not adequately fulfilled their duties in the care and protection of the young people.

Records in the home state that young people have, 'returned home under influence of cannabis' and that they were observed smoking cannabis in the back garden of the home. Staff described on an incident sheet, 'She was slurring her words and her demeanour had changed.' There was no evidence that staff took any measures to seek medical advice or to monitor the young person as to the effects of cannabis. This failed to protect the young person and potentially could have placed her at risk of harm.

During the inspection, the inspector observed the bedrooms of all young people, two of which were unclean. There were clothes strewn across the floor and dirty plates with the remnants of old food and discarded takeaway containers left lying on the floor. Both bedrooms were emitting a strong unpleasant odour. This is not conducive to a warm and

welcoming environment and presents a risk to young people's health and safety.

Safer recruitment procedures are not always adhered to. For example, a reference for a staff member had been requested and received. On receipt of the reference, the registered manager identified that the name on the reference was not that of the intended applicant. The registered manager proceeded to score out the typed name on the reference and then added in pen the name of the intended applicant. This is poor practice and brings into questions the integrity of the reference. In another example, the registered manager was unable to evidence how decisions had been made that an applicant would be a suitable candidate. For example, there were no questions from the interview process to show how their knowledge, skills or experience for the role were assessed. Furthermore, there was no evidence that appropriate checks had been made with regard to verifying this member of staff's identity. These employment practices do not safeguard young people or minimise potential risks to them, as they could be cared for by adults who have not been suitably vetted.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager is qualified and has the experience to undertake her role. Young people said that they are able to talk to her. In addition, one young person nominated her for an award from the local council. However, her inaction to ensure that effective care planning is in place for each young person and that the staff team strictly adheres to safeguarding procedures to protect young people has led to the serious failings found during this inspection.

The young people live in a home that is poorly managed. The staff are unclear about the ethos and philosophy of the home, as described in the statement of purpose. There have been failings in management oversight and monitoring of the home to identify areas of weakness and to take decisive action to resolve these. As a result, young people's progress and safety are compromised.

Staff receive regular supervision, which they said informs their practice. This is further supported by team meetings, which the young people are invited to join. Staff comments include, 'My supervision is good and we regularly discuss the quality standards at team meetings' and, 'It's a good team and we have good discussions about the young people.' While staff value the supervision that they receive, this has not been effective in ensuring that the quality and standards of practice at the home are maintained.

Quality internal monitoring does not take place regularly and, as a result, the quality and standard of care have fallen to an unacceptable level. The manager has not reviewed all records in the home or evaluated incidents that have occurred, to identify shortfalls in staff practice and to highlight patterns and trends. For example, the manager has failed to have an oversight of the number of times and the reasons why police were called to the home to manage young people's behaviour. Consequently, areas for development are not clearly highlighted, and there is no meaningful development plan to address areas of concern. This means that leaders and managers are not taking action to

improve the experiences, care and safety of young people.

Significant events involving young people resident in the home have not been reported to Ofsted. A failure to share information with all relevant people 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 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.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC065780

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Milestones Care Homes Limited

Registered provider address: 32 Fieldway, Maghull, Liverpool L31 5NB

Responsible individual: Mark Armstrong

Registered manager: Nina Howarth

Inspector

Elaine Allison, social care inspector

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