

SC066010

Registered provider: Quality Protects Children Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people, of either gender, with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 June 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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.

Date of last inspection: 1 September 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

Ofsted issued a compliance notice on 12 September 2016. The provider complied with this.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because

- There has been a period of instability since the last inspection, both in leadership of the home and in disrupted placements for young people.
- Leaders have not sufficiently assessed risks of harm to young people and taken account of this in planning their care. This includes how they assess the appropriateness of who is admitted to the home.
- Care practice is weak in some areas, such as the poor supervision of young people, inconsistency in the use of physical intervention and gaps in record-keeping.
- Leaders do not ensure that the care of young people is in line with the statement of purpose for the home.
- Staff training is not kept up to date or evaluated for its effectiveness in meeting the needs of young people.
- The registered provider's understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home is poor. This compromises the ability to make and sustain improvements.

The children's home's strengths

- A new manager is in post. He has started to make improvements and acknowledges the home's weaknesses.
- Young people are enjoying a recent period of stability and benefit from good relationships with staff. They learn how to keep themselves safer.
- The manager and staff have developed positive links with local agencies. This helps young people with their education and provides support with other care needs.
- Young people are able to maintain and improve levels of family contact. They develop new skills to support their transition to adulthood.
- The number of missing from home incidents has decreased. Care practice in this aspect of safeguarding young people has improved.
- Staff morale is much better. Staff think that the new manager is more supportive and is making the home a better place for young people.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/09/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
11/04/2016	Full	Good
23/11/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/08/2015	Full	Requires improvement

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
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. (Regulation 12 (1) and (2)(a)(i))	31/07/2017
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 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 the staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; and 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. (Regulation 13 (1) and (2)(c)(f)) Specifically, ensure that the matching of young people prevents them from being a significant risk to each other; obtain timely psychological assessments of young people; plan to meet all healthcare needs of young people; ensure that young people attend their place of education; evaluate the effectiveness of staff training; improve the supervision of young people; and	30/09/2017

reduce the complaints from neighbours.	
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (5))	31/08/2017
The registered person must review the appropriateness and 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). (Regulation 46 (1)) In particular, update the latest review taking into account the diverse needs of young people admitted since then.	31/07/2017

Recommendations

- Any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5). In particular, ensure that assessments are consistently rigorous from month to month.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Three of the five young people living in the home since the last inspection experienced unplanned endings to their placements. One of these three admitted to drug-running for the other two and ultimately moved into a secure unit. Two of them had a personal relationship that was characterised by conflict and was not a good experience for other young people who had already witnessed domestic violence. The home does not have a good track record of providing young people with placement stability.

There were times during these placements that young people made progress in areas of their lives. For example, attendance and achievements at school, developing their personality and building relationships with staff. Eventuality disengagement with staff and support services, along with increases in substance misuse, offending behaviour and missing from home episodes, led to placements ending.

One young person who did suffer through this chaotic period has managed to make

significant progress with his education and achievements. Compared to his past, his behaviour is much improved and he benefits from positive relationships with staff. He claims, 'This is the best home I have been in'. He feels that staff genuinely care about him and are supporting him to do well in life.

Staff have helped another young person re-engage in education. However, a recent serious incident has prevented attendance for the last two weeks. The manager is working hard with other agencies to end this suspension.

Young people are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles, eat a good diet and take regular exercise. Staff support them to attend appointments. They ensure that young people have access to specialist help for their emotional well-being and for their specific needs about substance misuse and allergies. Psychological assessments, promised as part of young people's care plans, are slow to be completed, and this may cause unnecessary delay in obtaining future support. Not all health information about young people is in their care plans, such as the details for arranging an annual immunology appointment.

Young people know how to complain and either have access to advocacy or they are being provided with this in the near future. The manager responds well to complaints. In the light of complaints from neighbours, he is ensuring that staff spend more time with young people and aims to stop young people throwing things at neighbours' property.

The environment in the home is more settled than it was five months ago. Staff have used this time to build stronger relationships with young people to help them feel safe and secure. Young people benefit from the support that staff give them to maintain contact with their families. This is especially important as they live a long way from home. Consequently, young people are able to retain a good sense of their identity.

Young people build on their existing life-skills and learn new ones, becoming more independent in the process. Staff do not reflect this in young people's care records and independence assessment packs. As a result, it is difficult to objectively plan for their future transition to adulthood.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The location assessment for the home is not up to date. Potential risks from gang affiliation in local areas are not included. Consequently, decision-making is not robust in admitting young people to the home when their involvement in gangs is a known risk. Not all staff receive training about safeguarding young people from the dangers of associating with gangs. Concerns about young people contacting people they know from previous placements are not fully assessed. These shortfalls potentially put young people at risk of harm. The new manager intends to train all staff appropriately, and to improve the risk assessments for young people and the location assessment.

Young people are known to misuse cannabis. Their engagement to date with a local support service is minimal. Staff use additional measures, such as supervising young

people's spending, to limit this behaviour. However, this has not worked in the past and evaluation of previous practice has not been robust in considering alternative strategies.

Decisions about which young people move into the home have led to young people having a negative impact on each other. This includes more missing from home incidents, substance misuse, offending behaviour and disrupted placements. The manager confirmed that there would be no further admissions until he is registered with Ofsted. He also intends to improve the quality of decision-making about future admissions.

Missing from home incidents and other risk-taking behaviour of young people were issues that led to three unplanned placement endings. Since then, the frequency that young people are missing is much lower. Information that staff share with the police about risks to young people is better and leads to more informed decision-making to ensure young people's safety.

The manager is encouraging staff to be more consistent and to set young people clear expectations about their behaviour and daily routines. Staff are effective in managing challenging behaviour and limit the use of physical intervention in resolving any conflict. This type of intervention was on a rare occasion not a last resort to keep young people safe, but to retrieve an item of property. The manager is giving staff more support and increasing the level of reflection after such incidents to improve practice.

Young people are happy and feel secure and settled in the home. They engage with staff in discussions about how to improve their own safety and welfare. Staff use up-to-date resources and quiz young people about their knowledge. This includes key issues in young people's lives, such as their relationships, internet safety, sexual health, knife crime and self-medication. Staff are motivated to keep young people safe and free from harm. These learning experiences that they provide are helping young people to make more sensible and safer choices.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There have been three different managers in the last six months, which is not a stable leadership arrangement. This has led to weaknesses in evaluating the quality of care. Reflection and exploration of lessons learned from previous unplanned placement endings has not taken place to a sufficient degree. As a result, the staff team and new manager are not in a strong position to improve the experiences and care of young people.

The registered provider was slow to act on concerns raised about one of the previous managers. This put young people's welfare at risk. The registered provider does not have an adequate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. This is evident in the basic assumptions made, and the lack of evaluation and analysis in the matching report for the last young person's admission.

Training for staff is not up to date and is not provided in a timely way. For example,

young people are admitted with specific needs in relation to allergies, substance misuse and gang affiliation prior to staff receiving training in these areas. Managers have not sufficiently evaluated staff training and development to ensure that future practice will be effective.

Managers have not taken action to ensure that care practice is in line with what is set out in the home's statement of purpose. This document is misleading for placing authorities considering a referral to the home, and the welfare of young people is at risk. The staff do not ensure that the '10-point checklist' is used when police charge young people for offences. The 'best fit' matching for young people does not protect young people from being a significant risk to each other. The staff team has not worked particularly well with young people who have been displaying high-risk behaviours.

There is a new manager who has been in post since the beginning of May. He has started to take stock of what needs to improve and is making positive changes. Training, supervision and appraisal arrangements for staff are better. He has identified areas where staff support of young people has been lacking and he is making a positive difference, such as improving the quality of young people's diets and addressing the complaints from neighbours.

Staff morale is increasing. The staff team thinks that the new manager is making the home a better place to work in, as well as better for young people. He sets clear expectations, both with regard to staff practice and the boundaries for young people. Staff feel that he is approachable and willing to listen to their ideas and concerns.

The manager spends time getting to know the young people and builds positive relationships with them. He also takes time to reflect about practice with staff and support them to manage difficult situations. He is keen to develop the staff team and strengthen its skills and knowledge.

The recommendation made at the last inspection about the statement of purpose is met, but care practice requires improvement to meet the revised aims and objectives of the home.

Monitoring systems have improved and meet the requirements made at the last inspection. The registered provider has appointed a new independent visitor. Reports of her monthly visits to the home are better than previous ones. Ofsted recommends that the level of consistency in evaluation of care practice improves, particularly when young people are not making progress.

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 who 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: SC066010

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Quality Protects Children Ltd

Registered provider address: Quality Protects Children Ltd, Hill House, Archway Road, Huyton, Liverpool L36 9XB

Responsible individual: Anthony Nolan

Registered manager: Awaiting registration application

Inspector

Simon Morley, social care inspector

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