

SC066560

Registered provider: Meadows Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

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

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 November 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: 21 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- There have been significant shortfalls in the risk management of young people.
- On at least three occasions, staff failed to follow young people's risk

assessments and care plans. Consequently, staff failed to safeguard young people effectively or promote their welfare.

- There have been many changes in staffing. As a result, young people experience inconsistent support.
- Since the last inspection, 39 different people, aside from the core staff team, have worked at the home. This does not promote young people's welfare.
- The staff rota does not consistently reflect who is working in the home. This makes it difficult to track who has been caring for young people.
- Records relating to the safe administration of medication are confusing and unclear. This is not good practice and has the potential to impact young people's safety.
- One young person experienced a disruptive and short placement, as staff were unable to meet his needs.

The children's home's strengths:

- Most young people make progress in relation to their health, education and emotional well-being.
- Young people benefit from good relationships with the core staff.
- Multi-agency working is effective. The management team has proactively promoted this. Work takes place with a wide range of external professionals to identify concerns and actions to reduce these.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/10/2016	Full	Good
18/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
18/08/2015	Full	Good

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
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 upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; - 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; - 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. (Regulation (12)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b))	05/01/2018
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 to aspire to their full potential and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13(b)(2)(e))	05/01/2018
Ensure adequate arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23(1))	05/01/2018
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(4)(3))	05/01/2018

In particular, ensure that the staff rota is an accurate reflection of who has cared for young people.	
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Recommendations

- It is essential that homes understand what will be required of them before they accept responsibility for a child's placement, to avoid disruption and instability for the child in future and for other children in the home. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', April 2015, page 56 paragraph 11.5).

With particular reference to the home's pre-admission policy providing clarity to staff on what pre-placement information and contacts are essential.

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of the inspection, the young people living at the home make good progress. That said, the shortfalls in help and protection and leadership and management have influenced the overall judgement in this area.

The young person who was recently admitted to the home is making good progress. This young person benefited from a planned move from another home within the organisation. The staff arranged an introductory visit prior to admission. This helped prepare the young person and enabled her to settle in well. During the inspection, the young person said: 'I knew some of the staff because I've met them before. I like them and they have made me feel very welcome.'

Unfortunately, not all transitions have been successful. Two young people have left the home since the last inspection. One young person did not become increasingly safe and the registered manager recognised that the home could no longer ensure the young person's safety. The register manager served notice on this placement and supported the transition to a new placement. The second example relates to the quality of the information gathered prior to admission. On one occasion, the information gathered did not enable the registered manager to make a full analysis of a young person's specific care needs prior to admission. As a result, staff were unable to meet the needs of one young person and notice was quickly served on this placement.

More positively, the manager has now undertaken some learning from this and has reflected upon how he can actively seek information from others involved with the young people prior to admission. Moving forward, this will help strengthen the matching process and enable the manager to make more informed decisions about future admissions.

Young people's attendance at school or other education provisions is good. Staff work hard to motivate young people to achieve and are good at sourcing opportunities for

young people who struggle in formal learning environments. Effective links are developed with education providers and this has helped support and encourage young people to reach their full potential.

Young people are encouraged to be healthy and live a healthy lifestyle. Their individual needs are immediately assessed when they arrive at the home and are closely monitored. Young people are registered with universal health services and staff encourage them to attend appointments.

Young people's emotional well-being is promoted through the therapeutic interventions provided by the organisation. Furthermore, a variety of external services, such as access to sexual health and substance misuse practitioners, is also provided. The combination of services available for young people ensures that their physical, emotional and mental health needs are being fully addressed.

Staff encourage and support young people to engage in a variety of activities at the home and out in the community. Favourite pastimes include cooking and baking, and trips to the cinema and skate park. These opportunities and experiences help build self-confidence and expand young people's social experiences.

Young people benefit from well-planned contact with their families which is enjoyable and safe. Staff maintain close links with families and, where appropriate, ensure that they are involved in care planning decisions. Contact is promoted and maintained in a way that meets young people's best interests. As a result, young people are able to maintain links and develop relationships with those who are significant to them.

Staff support and encourage young people to develop their knowledge and skills that they will require for their independence in a safe, nurturing and supportive manner. Staff encourage young people to get involved in the shopping, cooking and cleaning of their home. In the main, young people will engage positively with these tasks and are becoming more confident in their abilities.

A great deal of effort and thought goes into ensuring that the home feels like a 'home' to the young people. Regular maintenance to the home ensures that damage or wear and tear issues are addressed promptly. Young people report that they are happy with their own bedrooms and confirm that they can personalise these to express their individuality and to reflect their own specific tastes.

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

Since the last inspection, there have been significant shortfalls in the safeguarding of young people, which has had a detrimental impact on the young people's welfare. Not all staff have stringently adhered to agreed risk management strategies and have failed to safeguard young people effectively. Staff have not been vigilant in their supervision of young people, which resulted in one young person experiencing an unplanned change of placement.

The experienced members of the staff team demonstrate an understanding of risk and child protection protocols. However, practice is inconsistent and not all staff ensure that day-to-day practice safeguards young people. For example, one young person was found to be under the influence of alcohol. Records in relation to this incident were poorly written and offered no detail of how this was managed by staff. Lack of effective action left this young person at serious risk of harm.

The core staff understand the risk that the internet may pose for young people. However, some less experienced staff failed to implement their responsibility for maintaining the well-being of young people by adhering to risk assessments. For example, lack of vigilance by staff provided one young person with the opportunity to gain full access to the wi-fi password and use of electronic devices, where access should have been supervised by staff.

Good behaviour is praised and rewarded, which stimulates more socially acceptable behaviours. In the main, preventative behaviour management practices have been successful because of the positive relationships that exist between the core staff and young people. Staff are able to identify and respond quickly to issues that arise and de-escalate incidents without the need for physical intervention. Additionally, the number of sanctions imposed is also small. This further demonstrates that the ethos of the home is to encourage rewards for positive behaviour.

There has been a reduction in the number of incidents of young people going missing from home. When this does occur, staff take prompt action and young people know what staff will do. Staff make every effort to find the young person. They go out and look for them and make continued efforts to get in touch. The arrangement for independent return interviews is appropriate and provides an opportunity to develop future care practice to further reduce the risk of young people going missing.

Recruitment practice and clearance procedures are thorough and meet with regulatory requirements. This ensures that any person employed to work at the home does not present any known safeguarding risk to young people.

Some young people have prescribed medication. However, the current arrangements for the safe administration of medication are not robust. Staff confusion concerning the current recording system makes it difficult to complete an accurate audit of medication. At the time of the inspection, this has not had a detrimental impact on the well-being of young people. However, it is not safe practice and needs to improve.

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

Although there is evidence of good practice, further improvement is required before the home can be judged to be consistently good. The current staff and management team are very child-focused, positive, enthusiastic and motivated. That said, there has been a significant turnover of staff since the last inspection. This does not provide a stable environment for young people in which to develop security.

Leaders and managers do not maintain essential information as required by regulation.

For example, 39 temporary staff have worked at the home since the last inspection. Appropriate information is held on each of these individuals. However, the staff rota does not consistently reflect who has worked at the home. This represents a safeguarding concern as it is difficult to track who has cared for the young people.

The staff spoken with during the inspection feel well supported, with the programmes of supervision and appraisal taking place with consistency. Appropriate development opportunities are in place and this enables the staff to feel confident in their practice. All training that is required to be refreshed regularly is kept up to date. The manager is also proactive in seeking more specific training. This helps to ensure that skills remain current to meet the needs of the existing group of young people.

Liaison with other agencies is effective. Positive relationships exist between managers and other professionals. Comments include: 'The manager is proactive and approachable. He seeks support when required and is quick to take action.' Parents are equally positive and confirm that communication is 'regular' and helps to maintain open and honest dialogue for the benefit of young people.

The strengths and weaknesses of the home are known and a clear development plan is in place to tackle shortfalls. Internal and external monitoring of the home takes place regularly. Reports demonstrate that performance is reviewed appropriately and the manager takes quick action to rectify any shortfalls. Stakeholder feedback is also sought and there is clear evidence that young people contribute to quality assurance systems within the home. This helps the manager to assess and analyse the effectiveness of care practices within the home.

The notification of significant events experienced at the home since the previous inspection and sent to Ofsted was reviewed. The manager demonstrated an understanding of his responsibilities regarding notifications.

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 differences 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: SC066560

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Meadows Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Meadows Care Ltd, Egerton House, Wardle Road
Rochdale OL12 9EN

Responsible individual: Karen Brandon

Registered manager: Robin McLoughlin

Inspector

Ceri Evans, social care inspector

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