

## Children's homes inspection - Full

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| <b>Inspection date</b>           | <b>18/08/2015</b>                                                                   |
| <b>Unique reference number</b>   | <b>SC066560</b>                                                                     |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>        | <b>Full</b>                                                                         |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>         | <b>Children's home</b>                                                              |
| <b>Registered person</b>         | <b>Meadows Care Limited</b>                                                         |
| <b>Registered person address</b> | <b>Meadows Care Ltd, Egerton House, Wardle Road, ROCHDALE, Lancashire, OL12 9EN</b> |

|                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Responsible individual</b> | <b>Mr Niel Shelmerdine</b> |
| <b>Registered manager</b>     | <b>Vacant Post</b>         |
| <b>Inspector</b>              | <b>Stella Lovie</b>        |

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| <b>Inspection date</b>                                                                          | <b>18/08/2015</b>             |
| <b>Previous inspection judgement</b>                                                            | <b>Improved Effectiveness</b> |
| <b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>                                                 | <b>None</b>                   |
| <b>This inspection</b>                                                                          |                               |
| <b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b> | <b>Good</b>                   |
| The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.            |                               |
| <b>how well children and young people are helped and protected</b>                              | <b>Good</b>                   |
| <b>the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>                                     | <b>Requires improvement</b>   |

**SC066560**

## **Summary of findings**

### **The children's home provision is good because:**

- Staff provide a genuinely warm and nurturing home environment that closely resembles a family situation so that young people feel cared for and valued. This enables young people to make good progress relative to their age, individual circumstances and time in placement.
- In the main, young people enjoy very stable placements and receive highly individualised, quality support from staff.
- Staff work in a non-judgemental way and respect young people as individuals. They are resilient and show a great deal of perseverance when managing young people's occasionally challenging and confrontational behaviour.
- Young people are fully supported to participate in a wide range of enjoyable activities that promote their general development.
- The home is very comfortable and welcoming and provides an environment designed to meet the needs of and develop young people.
- Young people are safeguarded by competent child protection practice, complemented by the fact that they are able to build trusted and secure relationships with staff in the home. The manager takes prompt action to address all safeguarding concerns, including calling for review of young people's care plans when she feels they can no longer keep them safe.
- Effective arrangements for monitoring practice ensure that there is suitable management and oversight of the care that is given to young people and the progress they make. However some shortfalls are identified and there are aspects of the leadership and management that require attention, particularly in relation to appropriate matching of young people. Four requirements and one recommendation are therefore raised in order to drive that improvement and comply with regulations. Those shortfalls have not had a lasting adverse impact on young people's welfare or safety.

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

| Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Due date   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <p>12: The protection of children standard: 12.—(1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>(a) that staff—</p> <p>(iv) manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> <p>(b) 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.</p> <p>This is with specific reference to managers ensuring that vacancy risk assessments promote safe and appropriate matching of young people admitted to the home.</p> | 18/09/2015 |
| <p>13: The leadership and management standard: 13.—(1) The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>(a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and .</p> <p>(b) promotes their welfare. .</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>(c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p>                                                                                                                                                                                           | 18/10/2015 |

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| <p>e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child.</p> <p>This is specifically in relation to ensuring staff have a suitable level of training to manage the known behaviours of the children the registered person admits into the home such as self-harming and sexually inappropriate behaviour. It also refers to ensuring that all staff shifts have at least one core member of staff on duty to promote consistency and stability.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |            |
| <p>7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard: —(1) The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>(a) develop positive relationships with them; .<br/> (b) engage with them; and .<br/> (c) take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>b) ensure that each child—<br/> iii) is given appropriate advocacy support.</p> <p>This is with specific reference to ensuring that children without any family support and who struggle to attend their statutory reviews are enabled to understand the advocacy role, and are supported to develop a positive relationship with an independent person who can make sure the child has a voice in their planning meetings.</p> | 18/11/2015 |
| <p>29: Continuing professional development: registered person and responsible individual: The registered manager must undertake such continuing professional development as is necessary to ensure that the registered manager has the skills needed for managing the home. This is with specific reference to the manager receiving additional in-house training as a new manager, and enrolling onto the appropriate leadership and management qualification for the role. (Regulation 29 (4))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 18/09/2015 |

## Recommendations

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

- When a child who has been missing is found, they must be offered an independent return interview. This should be an in-depth interview and is normally best carried out by an independent person (ie, someone not involved in caring for the child) who is trained to carry out these interviews and is able to follow-up any actions that emerge. (Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from care, January 2014, page 14, paragraphs 31 and 32)

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

This private children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is also registered to provide education.

### Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement   |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 27/02/2015      | CH - Interim    | improved effectiveness |
| 08/10/2014      | CH - Full       | Good                   |
| 04/02/2014      | CH - Interim    | Satisfactory Progress  |

### Inspection Judgements

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Judgement grade |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>good</b>     |
| Young people make good progress in many aspects of their lives. They benefit from well-planned care, which is highly personalised to their specific needs. They are assisted through key working and more specialist interventions to develop an understanding of their lives, employ coping strategies and gain some resilience to adversity. Staff are clearly aware of the key focuses for each young person and what goals they are working towards. Targets are clearly outlined and tracked in |                 |

the young people's placement plans. Throughout, young people are encouraged to make choices and see the consequences of their actions, both good and bad. As one independent reviewing officer commented: 'I think the placement has been a resounding success for our young person. The home is absolutely meeting her needs. Staff have worked very hard to give her positive group social activities. I review the young person's siblings as well and have had positive feedback from them about how well she is doing there. This is very encouraging.'

In the main, young people enjoy very stable placements, enabling them to sustain positive attachments to staff and establish social networks in the community. This facilitates intervention over the long term and provides a strong platform from which young people can develop emotional resilience and positive sense of self. Staff work hard to establish and sustain positive relationships with young people based on the values of good parenting and trust. The home environment is comfortable and maintained to a good standard. It reflects the warm and nurturing care provided by staff. As one social worker remarked in written feedback to the provider: 'My young person has experienced significant disruption in her life and with the regular communication and the interactions I observed during my visits, I could be confident that she was being not only cared for but loved. I have been very impressed with your service.'

Staff provide educational opportunities to encourage young people's self-esteem and develop their confidence. This promotes their academic achievement and ability. These positive learning experiences are very useful in helping them to reintegrate into conventional schooling. Staff understand the need to be flexible in their interventions according to the needs of the young person. By taking part in structured one to one activities, young people are supported to learn in ways that conventional schools are not always able to provide. They promote improvements in a range of areas such as concentration, engagement and communication skills. This approach is based on a strong emphasis on building trust, thereby helping young people to feel safe and secure which is a pre-requisite for learning. As one social worker confirmed: 'Staff didn't give up. They looked at a creative timetable for her and gave her a very good informal learning environment. It's all been around her needs and how best to engage her.' In addition, staff are encouraged to show creativity in widening young people's awareness of differing religions and cultural beliefs. This helps to promote tolerance and social cohesion.

Staff have sought and followed specialist advice in working with young people with additional needs. They have incorporated specific communication techniques into their behaviour management strategies. This means they communicate effectively so that young people understand the boundaries and are able to make their wishes and feelings heard. Young people's views are asked and taken notice of in meetings, in key worker sessions, and by staff generally asking and listening to their views. That said, not all young people have independent advocacy support to help them get their views heard in meetings which make some of the more complex decisions about their lives. This is essential to ensure that they feel as involved and influential as possible in those planning forums. Staff make good use

of handovers and team meetings to promote consistency and to be creative in thinking about how to develop these strategies further.

Young people enjoy good health because their health needs are effectively identified and services provided to meet them. They are encouraged and supported to attend routine and specialist appointments to ensure they remain fit and well. Young people engage regularly in sports and other active pursuits such as rock climbing and swimming, and receive good quality advice and support to do so. This promotes their physical health and well-being. The home has access to in-house therapeutic services from qualified and registered therapists. Otherwise, psychological and emotional support is accessed through local community mental health services or other specialised support. This helps young people come to terms with previous life experiences and reach understanding and resolution.

Staff support and encourage young people in their hobbies and let them develop new interests and make sure they have a wide range of choices. This includes attendance at local clubs and sports facilities where they learn new skills and make friendships. Young people are encouraged in line with their age and cognitive abilities to learn independent skills such as keeping their rooms tidy, and helping with basic household tasks. These encourage them to acquire self-care skills and to feel part of the household.

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| <b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>good</b>     |
| <p>Young people enjoy warm and trusting relationships with staff and respond positively to the calm, measured demeanour of the manager and staff. Risk assessments and behaviour management plans are specific to each young person, and include specialist advice where appropriate. This helps staff to tailor their interactions with young people in accordance with young people's particular needs. For example, staff consulted with a specialist unit skilled in working with young people with learning disabilities so that they improved their communication strategies and were more aware of the sensory impact of the living environment on the young person's behaviour. This helped in general to reduce that young person's incidences of aggressive outbursts. As their social worker confirmed: 'My young person has definitely made progress since she has been in the home. She</p> |                 |



has become a lot calmer and is able to speak more about her feelings. She definitely feels safer. She is able to voice any concerns to staff and is a lot more willing to engage.'

Staff are effective in helping young people to understand the importance of compromise. Sanctions reflect the principles of reparation and restitution. Positive behaviour is consistently promoted by use of careful re-direction, de-escalation and incentive schemes devised with the young people. This helps to influence their behaviour constructively. When young people have needed restraint, managers oversee written records of these situations and speak to young people and staff about their experience. This informs improvements in behaviour management for young people, reduces the need for such interventions and supports staff development. It enables young people to reflect on their behaviour and take personal responsibility for their actions. Staff also have the opportunity to consider their practice and manage their feelings constructively after such situations. As one social worker observed: 'Their commitment to the young person is amazing. She has beaten some of them black and blue. They understand what lies behind her behaviour and know how important stability is to her.'

Young people feel happy and safe in the home and, for the large majority of the time, get on with their lives in a stable and constructive way. This means that for most of last year there were no occasions when young people went missing. However, during a three week period when a new young person was placed in the home, both young people started to go missing. Staff followed agreed procedures in a coordinated way and were proactive in looking for the young people. As the police confirmed: 'Staff are very active when young people go missing. They get out and search for them. They do what they can to try to get them to come back. I have good communication with them. They share information well and are forthcoming.' Staff worked closely with all the relevant agencies to try to reduce the risk of harm. They escalated concerns appropriately in consultation with relevant agencies so that strategy meetings and statutory review meetings took robust action to safeguard the young people. As a result, the new young person was removed to an alternative placement and the other young person settled back into her previous stable pattern of behaviour. The manager ensured that return interviews were conducted to try to understand the push-pull factors causing the young people to run away. However these interviews were not fully independent as they were conducted by a manager from within the organisation. This has potential to inhibit obtaining a full account of why the young person went missing. They should be provided by someone who is completely independent of the home so that young people can speak freely, including about the home and organisation if necessary.

Staff are trained in all aspects of safeguarding young people, are alert to young people's vulnerabilities and risks of harm, and are knowledgeable about how to implement safeguarding procedures. They are able to demonstrate that they understand the warning signs of sexual exploitation and are confident about how to act on them. Staff report that there is an open culture within both the home and

the wider organisation that supports the reporting of concerns. Staff know about the whistleblowing procedures and demonstrate appropriate values and determination to use them as necessary.

The manager has acted on learning from inspection of her other home and ensures that safer recruitment processes are followed so that unsuitable individuals do not have access to young people. Any concerns about young people's safety or well-being are always taken seriously and thoroughly investigated to a satisfactory outcome in collaboration with the relevant safeguarding agencies. As one independent reviewing officer confirmed: 'The provider addressed an issue of concern with a member of staff very professionally in consultation with the local authority designated person. I am very satisfied with how they dealt with this. They try to keep the young person very safe.'

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| <b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>requires improvement</b> |
| <p>The manager is new to her role and is in the process of applying to be the Registered Manager. She manages two small homes in close geographical proximity so is easily able to get to this home in the event of an emergency. She otherwise divides her time equally between the homes and is supported by a competent deputy manager. The manager has had to take on board a lot of responsibility and learning in a short space of time. She has yet to enrol on her appropriate leadership and management qualification, though is supported by regular supervision, monthly peer manager meetings and senior manager input as required. That said, it has been a big challenge for her, and senior managers have acknowledged that they need to provide additional support for those new managers in the organisation who have recently stepped up to this demanding role.</p> <p>Although this is a home for up to two young people, since the last inspection there has been only one young person living there for the majority of the time. There was a brief three week period in the summer when a second young person was admitted after a multi-agency risk assessed and planned transition process. That admission proved to be a poor decision in terms of matching as both young people immediately had an adverse impact on each other. Their behaviours became very unsafe in terms of aggression, disruption, running away and risk of sexual exploitation, and staff struggled to keep both young people safe. The manager had to supplement her core staff team with a number of reserve and agency staff which led to a decline in both continuity of care and consistency of approach during this period. The manager swiftly recognised that she had made a mistake in</p> |                             |

placing these two young people together. She acted to separate the young people by taking the original young person away on holiday. This was successful in helping that young person to calm and return to her usual patterns of behaviour. The manager offered the new young person's placing authority an alternative placement within the wider organisation, though this was declined. The manager called for review of the young person's care plan and took the difficult but necessary decision to serve immediate notice on her placement as they could not keep her safe. The original young person returned to the home after her holiday and has maintained her previously settled behaviours since then. There has been some learning for the manager from this situation in terms of the vulnerabilities of the original young person, and this is reflected in current thinking around future placements with her. However, there is scope for further learning for the provider and partner agencies in relation to potentially over-optimistic thinking about their matching risk assessments and staff skills to manage known, very high risk behaviours. The provider has accordingly arranged for a reflection meeting to take place together with partner agencies.

The core staff team were placed under a lot of strain during this period. It is not reflective of their usual stable and consistent way of working. In the main, the staff team works collaboratively to provide reliable consistency and stability. There are clear responsibilities and accountabilities and they have a sense of shared ownership about their practice. Good staff ratios ensure that young people are appropriately supervised. Staff are supported in their role by formal supervision that is systematic, robust and challenging. Staff development is encouraged, as is learning from mistakes. Staff feel they receive support and are valued in the role that they play. They have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and young people contribute towards this process. This helps to ensure that the manager gets a full picture as possible of individual staff performance so that she can promote their professional development.

Staff receive all their mandatory training. It is further supplemented by additional training to reflect specific needs of the young people. As one social worker commented: 'They have been proactive in skilling themselves up in working with a young person with some learning difficulties. They were able to recognise their areas of needs as a team. I was impressed with this as you don't often find an organisation that is willing to admit that some skill areas are missing and then do something about it.' This has helped staff to recognise the roots of young people's difficulties and identify effective ways to help. It also ensures that staff survive the challenge of caring for very traumatised young people and enables them to remain positively connected to them and help them with their pain. That said, staff are still not fully trained to work with all the complex needs of the young people they care for. This potentially inhibits their competency in managing some associated behaviours.

Monthly independent visitor reports are thorough and well documented. They give a clear overview of the operation of the home and highlight good practice as well as shortfalls. Actions are raised and addressed quickly by the manager. Young

people and a small sample of social workers are consulted and have raised no concerns. All incidents, notifications and restraints are reviewed and commented upon. This provides a useful contribution to the quality assurance of the home. Verbal and written feedback from external professionals demonstrates that the manager has built effective working relationships with partner agencies, as confirmed by one such professional: 'I think we have an excellent working together relationship. There is great communication and I feel I know my young person much better as a result. They inform us about everything.'

The Statement of Purpose defines the life and work of the home. This means that placing authorities and relatives are clear about how the home works and what to expect from the service. The young people's guide to the home similarly helps young people to know how they will be supported, what their rights are and what the expectations of them are.

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

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

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