

# SC356318

Registered provider: The Partnership of Care Today Children's Services

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

A large private provider operates this home. Ofsted has registered the service to provide care and accommodation for up to two children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

**Inspection dates:** 8 to 11 December 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 9 March 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The focus of the service is on children's individual needs. Children experience a high level of personalised support from a consistent team.
- Most children experience planned admissions that provide a high level of continuity. Most move to family situations afterwards.

- The turnover of managers has been challenging, but the company has minimised its impact. A new manager is in post and the area manager is fully involved in the service.
- Staff maintain strong links with children's families and other professionals.
- Children re-engage in formal education. Their academic progress is often gradual but clear.
- Children expand their horizons and gain self-confidence by using community services safely.
- Despite occasional difficulties, overall, children engage in few negative behaviours. Staff manage risks well and make the boundaries clear to children.

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 09/03/2017      | Full            | Requires improvement |
| 25/11/2016      | Interim         | Not judged           |
| 25/02/2016      | Interim         | Not judged           |
| 21/08/2015      | Full            | Requires improvement |

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children experience a high level of personalised care and are often the only child in the home. They get to know the staff well and feel that this is a positive part of the service. One described the staff as 'brilliant'. A parent commented on the welcoming, family atmosphere in the home.

The home has served several purposes since the last inspection, providing a temporary home to some children and a longer-term home to others. In both regards, it has been successful, with children making successful moves onwards. Children benefit from planned transitions into the home. This helps children to manage this change and to settle well.

Staff give children opportunities to explore their cultural backgrounds through a variety of ways, such as trips out to different places, shopping in specialised shops, and cooking particular meals. This helps children to develop their identities.

Staff establish strong relationships with children's families, whenever possible. For many children, this excellent practice has led directly to them returning home. Others have re-established meaningful relationships with family members. This is particularly rewarding for everyone involved.

Children are fully engaged in their education programmes. The area manager makes sure that interruptions to education are minimal, for example by ensuring that the arrangements are in place prior to children's admission, whenever possible. For some children, this means having tutors until they receive a school placement. Regular attendance is a marked improvement for most. One child recently succeeded in completing a food hygiene course. Staff supplement formal education with activities that increase children's skills, for example with managing money and learning to use public transport.

The location of the home means that there is easy access to community facilities. Staff help children to maximise their use of these resources. They take up new pastimes and broaden their interests. One attends a gymnasium and intends to join a rugby club. These steps show improvements in his self-confidence and social skills.

Children enjoy healthy lifestyles and learn to protect themselves. Staff fully address their general and emotional health. Children plan healthy menus and have access to specialist services, if necessary. Their discussions with key workers address issues such as sexual health. Consequently, children move to a position where they make informed decisions.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Staff have a good understanding of the risks faced by individual children and act accordingly. For example, the senior personnel adjust staffing ratios and combinations of

staff to suit children's needs. Staff demonstrate this clearly in children's records, which provide a helpful summary of each child's progress. Progress varies according to each child's circumstances. The vast majority learn to keep themselves safe.

The child currently living at the home has not lived here long. Staff give the child opportunities to be independent and help them to manage independence safely. Senior staff promptly arrange meetings with other professionals to provide each child with the most effective care. After settling in, children thrive and cease their risk-taking behaviours completely. This has facilitated their successful moves to placements offering them greater independence.

Children rarely go missing. In the event of such an incident, staff liaise closely with other professionals, such as the police, to keep children safe. Similarly, children are at low risk of exploitation or radicalisation. Staff are fully aware of risks, are vigilant and know what to do if they have concerns. This helps to keep children safe.

Staff engage children well in conversations about their behaviour and other sensitive issues. Staff rarely use physical interventions and seek to educate children verbally and by reparative techniques. The independent reviewing officer for one child said, 'Staff are addressing his behaviour appropriately.' Children gradually develop acceptable ways of negotiating their wishes. Staff encourage children as much as possible, sometimes with praise and often with rewards. They ensure that such schemes operate fairly. One professional who visits the home regularly said, 'Staff are consistent. They treat children with respect and give them options and [explain] the consequences [of their decisions].'

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

It is to the credit of the team that the service to children is at a good standard. There has been little change in staffing since the last inspection. However, changes of manager have continued. The last registered manager remained for only eight months. The company has reviewed this pattern and has now recruited from within the company. It has minimised the impact on children by maintaining vacancies and sometimes having no children at all. Having a sister home across the road has facilitated the continuity of staff. The new manager started work in November. He has submitted his application to Ofsted and enrolled on a suitable management training course.

In the absence of a registered manager, the area manager has engaged well with other agencies. When necessary, he has established clear boundaries and insisted on the timely receipt of important documents. This approach contributes to the smooth operation of the home and ensures that other agencies respect children's rights. The area manager has addressed the shortfalls identified during the previous inspection. In particular, he has updated the statement of purpose and children's records. Consequently, social workers get an accurate impression of the service. The manager and the staff meet the aims and objectives of the home's statement of purpose.

Children see their records and have regular conversations about important issues. In addition, staff pay close attention to the cultural and religious needs of children.

Consulting with children about their care needs is a critical part of children's care, which contributes substantially to helping them feel comfortable in the home.

Members of the staff team receive regular supervision and training. They feel that they are a 'strong team' but recognise their need for consistent leadership. As befits a home that often has only one member of staff on duty, all team members competently undertake day-to-day and childcare tasks. Those staff with more experience have additional duties and are able to deputise for the manager. Unqualified staff are on target to qualify within the required timescale.

The monitoring processes have improved since the last inspection. Consequently, the manager has a good understanding of the strengths and needs of the service and a clear plan for its improvement.

## **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, 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:** SC356318

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** The Partnership of Care Today Children's Services

**Registered provider address:** Lansdowne House, 85 Buxton Road, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 6LR

**Responsible individual:** Vivien Snape

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspector

David Morgan, social care inspector

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