

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	09/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC356318
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	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	Philip Allcock
Inspector	David Morgan

Inspection date	09/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Not judged
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
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.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC356318

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Recording of some important information and decisions has not occurred. This reflects the manager's inexperience.
- The manager has not obtained key documents in a timely way. This has contributed to a delay in compiling in-house plans and risk assessments.
- High standards of care are jeopardised by insufficient attention to the young person's legal and religious needs.
- Independent monitoring of the service is not robust. Ofsted raised this previously. This increases the risk of a decline in the service going unnoticed.
- Other quality assurance processes are in place but are not sufficiently effective.

The children's home strengths

- The property refurbishment is of a high standard.
- The manager and his team are motivated and child-centred.
- Admission processes have improved substantially and give young people the best possible start.
- There are good opportunities for young people to increase their independence safely.
- Young people feel safe and do not put themselves in risky situations.
- The young person is fully engaged in many aspects of the home's operation.
- Education is underway and is a firm priority, as is re-establishing strong family relationships.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met In order to meet the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff - (c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's performance to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority. This is with regard to obtaining relevant documents in a timely way.	17/04/2017
6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, the registered provider must ensure that children receive care from staff who - (2)(b)(ii) promote each child's welfare. This is with regard to understanding and addressing any religious and nationality issues.	17/04/2017
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard to ensure that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe, the registered provider must ensure - (2)(a)(i) 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. This is with regard to compiling written risk assessments.	17/04/2017
14: The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard, the registered provider must ensure -	17/04/2017

(1)(a) that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.	
The registered person must include in the statement of purpose a description of the home's location with regard to the proximity of the other children's home, and description of the policy and approach in relation to children's rights. (Regulation 16, schedule 1, sections 4 and 9(b)).	17/04/2017

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that the registered person makes best use of information from internal monitoring to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- Ensure that the responsible individual can demonstrate that they can effectively supervise the management of each home individually. This is with regard to ensuring that the reports by independent visitors are sufficiently robust. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 60, paragraph 12.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

A large national provider of children's services operates this home. Ofsted has registered it for up to two children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/11/2016	Interim	Not judged
25/02/2016	Interim	Not judged
21/08/2015	Full	Requires improvement
06/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Requires improvement
Recently, this home was closed, refurbished, and a new manager and staff appointed. Therefore, although it has been registered with Ofsted for many years, it is like a newly registered service within a large and established organisation. One young person lives in the home and has been there for about a month. He experienced an excellent transition from another service within the company. This involved a gradual introduction, support from staff he knew, and no other young people to meet. He learned how the home operates. His social worker said, 'He experienced an impressive, robust transition, which helped him settle. [It was] excellent!' Importantly, his needs are compatible with those of the two boys in the manager's other home across the road. This is a key consideration with any new young people, based on previous negative experiences, and is one reason why the manager oversees both services. However, the young person's records do not clearly show why his admission was suitable. In the future, this could be important to the young person if he investigates his history. This is a breach of company policy, which the manager is addressing. The urban location of the service means that the young person has ready access to city amenities, such as cinema, trampolining, and other sporting and recreational opportunities. Staff share a company car with the home across the road but public transport is readily accessible. However, a lack of a care plan, written permissions, and delegated authority from the placing authority seriously affect care planning. In addition, the manager has not identified or tackled this shortfall. To some extent, the practical repercussions of this shortfall are less significant because staff received written and verbal information from the young person's previous carers. Staff do not sufficiently understand the young person's legal status and religious beliefs. Both shortfalls have a potentially significant impact on his care. The young person received care from two staff at all times in his previous placement with another service within this company. His marked progress means that this ratio has improved to one-to-one. As the only resident in the home, he has substantial influence over many daily activities. His ideas for recreational events and meals, for example, reflect in written plans for each week. Such planning revolves around formal but part-time education with a tutor. His acceptance of formal education is a significant step forward for the young person. The manager has arranged for another education service to complete the package. The young person has decided which member of staff will be his key worker, which demonstrates a good level of meaningful consultation. His relationships with staff are relaxed and constructive.	

In a short space of time, the young person and his family have made good progress towards normalising their relationships. Despite his family living a substantial distance away, staff facilitate an excellent level of face-to-face contact, supplemented by regular telephone calls. This helps the young person feel optimistic about the future.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The young person has shown good progress in successfully moving to a home in an urban location. He has not undertaken negative activities, such as running away or criminality. The staff team members have received extensive training and have substantial experience. This means that staff prevent difficulties and enforce boundaries. The manager and members of staff know the area well and keep in touch with other agencies, including the police. As with some other records, those relating to risks are not of a good standard. Written risk assessments about the current situation are absent. This means that staff do not have up-to-date information on which to act. On the other hand, the young person demonstrates a high level of responsible behaviour, which the staff team understands and acknowledges. Accordingly, the young person receives appropriate rewards and incentives. He feels safe and comfortable. However, strategies to address likely difficulties, such as decreased motivation, are not in place. This jeopardises team members' ability to work consistently and help the young person progress as much as possible. The manager understands the rights of young people. The property no longer has locks that prevent young people leaving independently, if they choose to. Consequently staff are not depriving young people of their liberty. A senior social worker commented recently, 'I'm impressed with the house, it's very homely.' Staff maintain appropriate standards of safety satisfactorily.	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
Ofsted registered the manager for the first time in January this year. He has extensive experience of caring for young people who are looked after but less in running children's homes. Other managers in the company have supported him	

well since he started work in October 2016. The qualifications he has are relevant but not sufficient, so he has enrolled on a suitable management course. The manager sets an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere in the home and is keen to make the service as good as possible. Staff and the young person appreciate his approach. At the last inspection, there were no residents, and no requirements or recommendations arose.

The statement of purpose is up to date. However, it lacks transparency regarding the proximity of the other children's home for which the manager is responsible. This means that placing authorities could overlook this important information. There is also a lack of information about children's rights.

A small team of experienced staff works at this home. An additional member of staff works between the two homes, as needed. One person is unqualified and he has enrolled on a suitable training course. He has had a break in service, so the manager has agreed a suitable alternative timescale for completion. The staff members are energetic and capable, showing the level of motivation and coordination required to work alone. They organise the shifts well and complete the planned activities and chores. Now that the warmer weather has arrived, plans are underway to improve the back garden with the help of the young person.

As mentioned above, some placing authority paperwork is missing. This has contributed to unnecessary delays in producing the in-house placement plan or tracker. This increases the risk of activities not occurring and momentum being lost. In other regards, young people's files are in good order. The manager has created a child-friendly document, which staff use with the young person when discussing his targets. This is a valuable improvement in the relevance and accessibility of young people's records.

Previous inspections raised concerns about the quality of the independent monitoring of the service. Minor improvements have not prevented the visitor pre-populating reports with misleading information. For example, when the home was closed the visitor incorrectly reported that fire drills occurred regularly. The visitor also speculates favourably and extensively about what will occur in the future, which calls into question her impartiality and independence. Some information is contradictory, and some procedures are described without analysis of their impact. The responsible individual is not addressing this problem effectively. As a result, the reports are not authoritative or persuasive and play no part in improving the quality of the service.

The manager has already received positive feedback from other professionals and the young person. Their perspectives provide important verification of the quality of the service. However, the manager does not review each suggestion and respond to the individual, which is especially important when it is a young person. This increases the risk of young people boycotting the process.

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 children looked after 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 that 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 that 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
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