

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	21/08/2015
Unique reference number	SC356318
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	The Partnership of Care Today Children's Services
Registered person address	Lansdowne House, 85 Buxton Road, STOCKPORT, Cheshire, SK2 6LR

Responsible individual	Vivien Snape
Registered manager	Geoffrey Peck
Inspector	David Morgan

Inspection date	21/08/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
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 is requires improvement because:

- The leadership of the service has been disrupted by unforeseen events, including the absence of the manager, deputy and of the deputising manager. This has contributed to inconsistent application of behaviour management plans.
- Admissions procedures have not been implemented effectively. Insufficient consideration has been given to the nearby children's home when assessing potential admissions. This has resulted in mismatching of young people and associated behavioural problems.
- At certain times, the staffing levels have not been increased quickly enough to meet the needs of young people. This has been stressful for staff and given insufficient support to young people.
- Inappropriate external door locks are used which prevent young people leaving the house as they are entitled to. Substantial repairs are required to the property.
- The statement of purpose does not describe the location of the home in sufficient detail or other factors affecting admissions. This is misleading for placing social workers and contributes to unsuitable admissions occurring.

The children's home strengths

- Young people benefit from a team of committed staff.
- The property is located close to urban amenities, which is useful for independence training and social opportunities.
- The home provides each young person with a good level of privacy in a normal domestic environment. Their individual needs are identified and discussed with them.
- Senior managers are acting promptly to ensure the shortfalls are remedied.

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
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) that staff - (i) 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 risk assessments being completed accurately; and (d) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health.	28/09/2015
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must – 2(d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; and (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. This is with regard to providing continuity of manager and deputy. Compile in relation to a children's home a statement which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. This is with regard to including an adequate description of the location that makes reference to nearby children's homes, and the staffing arrangements.	28/09/2015
14: The care planning standard	28/09/2015

In order to meet the care planning standard, the registered provider must ensure- (2)(c) that each child's relevant plans are followed. This is with particular regard to implementing their behaviour management plans consistently.	
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Recommendations

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

- Ensure that emergency admissions are not taken unless the home's statement of purpose and its capacity and support systems mean that it has the capability to care for children admitted at very short notice while continuing to offer high quality care to children already living in the home. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 15, paragraph 3.6)
- Ensure the home does not routinely deprive a child of their liberty without a court order. This is with regard to addressing the misuse of dead-locks on external doors. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 50, paragraph 9.63)
- Accept placements for children only where the registered person is satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. This is with regard to impact assessments being completed sufficiently and influencing admissions. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 56, paragraph 11.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for one or two children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is owned by a private company and located near to another children's home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/03/2015	CH - Interim	Sustained Effectiveness
30/10/2014	CH - Full	Good
07/01/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
22/08/2013	CH - Full	Outstanding
07/02/2013	CH - Interim	Satisfactory Progress
04/12/2012	CH - Full	Good
19/03/2012	CH - Interim	Good Progress
08/12/2011	CH - Full	Outstanding
09/03/2011	CH - Full	Good
09/11/2010	CH - Interim	Good
29/03/2010	CH - Interim	Good
28/09/2009	CH - Full	Good
06/11/2008	CH - Interim	Good
15/05/2008	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	requires improvement
The outcomes for young people are not good and require improvement. Managerial changes in recent months have de-stabilised the service received by young people. As a result, young people's engagement with staff has deteriorated and the plans to help them progress have been compromised. An important contributory factor is that the impact of another children's home nearby is not incorporated into the statement of purpose and locality assessment. Young people's introductions to the home are undermined by inadequate attention to how they are likely to match other young people from this home and a nearby home. On admission, young people receive adequate information about the home, its routines and the expectations. Their religious and cultural needs are identified and met. However, their engagement and progress are sometimes poor. Recently, young people's progress has fluctuated significantly because of the negative effect of other looked-after children. Placing social workers are not made aware of a nearby children's home so they cannot take this critical factor into account when planning or reviewing placements. Young people have good opportunities to develop their independence skills, given the challenges mentioned above. The home is located close to local and city amenities. Public transport is used routinely and young people are encouraged to learn to look after themselves in a safe and healthy way. Young people make satisfactory progress in learning budgeting and other skills. They maintain strong links with their friends and families so that these important relationships are in place when they leave the service. Healthy living is also promoted by the staff team's approach to drug misuse. Specialist services are used although recently young people have refused to attend meetings. Nevertheless, there is a decline in the use of such substances, which is important progress for young people. Young people meet other health practitioners as necessary. Good health is also promoted through a reasonable range of social and recreational activities. Young people gain confidence by undertaking new experiences, such as rock climbing, and attending local clubs. Young people often arrive at the home at short notice without firm plans for their education. Interim arrangements are implemented promptly and there is good liaison by staff with relevant services, including outdoor education providers. A satisfactory range of formal and informal methods are used to obtain the views of young people. Tutors visit young people at home, if necessary, and successfully re-	

engage them in formal education. Although the recent difficulties have been problematic, young people usually make clear progress in both attendance and attainment.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
The safety of young people is protected adequately but is compromised by the matching arrangements. This leads to behavioural difficulties that are exacerbated by insufficiently flexible staffing levels. As a result, there have been periods when staff have been, in the words of one external professional, 'overwhelmed'. This has now been remedied and occupancy levels reduced. There have been shortfalls in the consistent application of behaviour management strategies. This has confused young people, undermined staff, and contributed to negative incidents on and off site. Behaviour plans for individual young people are under review to ensure they are suitable. Initial steps are proving to be successful. Techniques used by staff successfully minimise the use of physical intervention. The physical safety of young people is satisfactory in most regards. These processes educate young people about keeping themselves safe but are compromised by the use of dead-locks on external doors. This means that once locked they can only be opened from either side with a key. This is not sufficiently safe in the event of an emergency. It also means that young people are kept in against their will without reasonable cause. This has become an unnecessary cause of irritation to them and negative behaviour. Important risks presented by young people are adequately identified. However, the assessment of risk levels posed by young people is incorrect. Some hazardous and frequent behaviour has been mistakenly assessed as low or medium risk. As a result, some of the records of young people's progress are misleading and the remedial strategies are insufficiently robust. This also contributes to incompatible admissions. Staff liaise effectively with the police to reduce the incidence of young people being absent and undertaking anti-social behaviour; there are very few incidents of young people going missing. No young people are at risk of sexual exploitation and discriminatory behaviours, such as bullying, are challenged well.	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
A coincidence of recent events has conspired to severely disrupt the management of the service. The temporary absence of the manager and his deputy, changes in area manager, and the resignation of a supporting manager led to insufficient coordination of the service for a short time. Inappropriate admissions and low staffing levels at critical times have made this situation worse and disheartened the team. Effective steps have now been taken to stabilise the service and to improve communication with social workers. The registered manager has extensive experience and a relevant qualification. A shortfall, raised in previous inspections, has been addressed so that all staff have now undertaken appropriate appraisals. The training and support of staff is satisfactory and young people benefit from staff who are suitably qualified. The team members are contributing to a thorough review of the whole service, which is in addition to the routine monitoring exercises. This is also taking into account the other home, which they support. The statement of purpose for the service lacks accuracy in some areas, which has a direct effect on the operation of the home. The staffing arrangements, for example, in which staff are shared between two homes is not described, and neither is the impact of the other home on admissions. This means that social workers and other readers do not get an accurate impression of how the service will work for their children. Young people's placement plans are up-to-date and provide a good record of their achievements. The improved documents allow staff to capture progress in a succinct and efficient way. Strategies are then reviewed using this clear information and adapted to meet each young person's changing needs. In some cases recently this has meant young people contributing to their departure plans, which have proved to be successful. The manager undertakes regular consultation exercises with young people, which confirm their satisfaction with the service. Concerns are addressed thoroughly and benefit from input from children's rights officers, where appropriate. Woodwork and decoration in the property has suffered damage recently. This is particularly evident in young people's bedrooms, which are no longer in a good condition. Maintenance work is required in several areas. Homeliness is reduced by the use of padlocks and clasps indoors, and there are ongoing problems with the central heating system.	

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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