

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	10/11/2015
Unique reference number	SC366002
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Alliance Care & Education Limited
Registered person address	Brow Top Farm, Quernmore, LANCASTER, LA2 0QW

Responsible individual	Andrew Taylor
Registered manager	Wayne Turner
Inspector	Marina Tully

Inspection date	10/11/2015
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

SC366002

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- Risk and compatibility assessments do not sufficiently identify or assess all relevant risks, such as, child sexual exploitation, drug and alcohol use and on-line safety. Consequently, staff do not have access to high quality information or guidance to enable them to fully promote young people's safety.
- Staff do not always follow risk assessments and take effective action to protect young people and staff from harm. This has resulted in an injury to a member of staff.
- Staff have not been trained on important safeguarding matters. This prevents them from acquiring a broad understanding of all risks, which in turn, hinders their ability to teach young people how to keep themselves safe.
- Inconsistencies in partnership working with other professionals, including the missing from home police co-ordinator and a child's social worker, is preventing a strong multi-agency approach to care planning.
- Restraint records do not provide sufficient analysis, by the manager, and this weakens the opportunity to reflect on practice and identify areas for development in behaviour management.
- Internal service monitoring systems are not identifying all areas for development. The manager is not ensuring that staff have completed all mandatory training, as stipulated in the home's statement of purpose, to meet young people's needs. Additionally, there are no systems in place for recording third party complaints, and, some staff accidents have not been recorded.

The children's home strengths

- Young people make pleasing progress from the start of their placements. Staff support them to engage with services that can help meet their needs, such as, looked after children nurse and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).
- School attendance has improved. This is down to staff's effective support, encouragement and partnership working with internal and external education providers, including virtual head teachers and the in-house school.
- Staff have developed trusting relationships with young people. This ensures they have someone who they can talk to about their worries and concerns. Staff's proactive approach to bullying is making young people feel safe in the home.
- Regular fun activities are supporting young people to grow in confidence and develop new friendships and skills. As a result, young people are developing greater emotional resilience.

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
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met In order to meet the engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— 5 (a) seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans. Particularly in relation to agreeing any plan to move a young person into semi-independent living accommodation; (d) seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. This is particularly in relation to sharing all relevant information with the police regarding young people moving into or living in the home.	19/12/2015
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered person must ensure that staff— (2) (a) (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; (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe; and, (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm. (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	19/12/2015

from harm. Specifically in relation to ensuring risk assessments are consistently followed and all dangerous items, identified in risk assessments, are stored securely.	
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must - (2) (a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child (h) ensure to use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	19/12/2015

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that records of the use of control, discipline and restraint enables the registered person to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concerns emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, paragraph 9.59, page 49)

Full report

Information about this children's home

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/03/2015	Interim	sustained effectiveness
20/08/2014	Full	Adequate
21/02/2014	Interim	Satisfactory Progress
31/05/2013	Full	Adequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	requires improvement
Young people make steady progress from the start of their placements. For one young person, there have been noticeable improvements in education; he has excellent school attendance and is meeting his targets in most subjects. Other young people engage with alternative education programmes that are more suited to their needs. Effective joint working between young people, staff, schools and virtual head teachers is helping young people to learn and develop. This was demonstrated in a young person's comments, 'I find it hard to get up for school in the morning but staff get me up. I am doing GCSE's through the virtual school and staff are supporting me to do this. I want to be a nurse and hope to go to university.' Staff promote young people's physical and emotional health by ensuring that they have access to a range of health services, including child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). To support delays in accessing CAMHS, or when young people refuse this service, the in-house therapists support young people with their emotional health. This is helping young people to address difficult past experiences and emotions, which in turn, is improving their behaviour and placement stability. Young people are learning how to promote their own health and are gaining a better understanding of healthy living. Their personalised health plans clearly identify and address their individual needs. Furthermore, input from the looked after children's (LAC) nurse is teaching young people about important matters, such as, healthy eating and sexual health. For example, one young man had devised his own healthy eating agreement with support from both staff and the LAC nurse. Although the home works effectively with some partner agencies, including virtual head teachers and the LAC nurse. They are not consistently working with all relevant agencies on all important matters. For example, on one occasion, staff did not consult with the placing authority before moving a young person into the home's semi-independent flat. The social worker stated that she learnt about the move after it had happened. Moreover, the missing person co-ordinator reported delays in staff sharing some information with them. This demonstrates inconsistencies in joint care planning and partnership working, to ensure that everyone is up-to-date and equally involved in meeting young people's needs. Young people maintain contact with family and friends when safe and appropriate	

to do so. Staff follow local authority contact plans, facilitate and supervise contact when required and fully understand the importance of these relationships. As a result, young people are gaining a better understanding of their background and thus, developing a sense of who they are.

Young people enjoy a range of activities, which they choose and help staff arrange. These include, holidays abroad, drama club, trips to the cinema and socialising with friends. As a result, they are provided with opportunities try new things, grow in confidence and make new friends.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
Young people reported that they feel safe living in the home. They have developed positive trusting relationships with most staff and this ensures they have someone to confide in when worried or upset. Staff are better at recognising and managing bullying. A young person said, 'bullying has happened but it doesn't anymore, kids are getting along now. Staff do stop it and they stop everyone from fighting.' Staff's proactive approach is making young people feel safer. Some young people moved in to the home with a high rate of going missing, which increased their risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE). As they settle, such risks noticeably reduce. In the main, staff follow missing from home procedures well, reporting the matter to police and placing authority, escalating to strategy meeting when necessary. An independent person routinely visits young people to discuss with them the associated risks and reasons for them going missing. This in turn, helps to identify trends and prevent reoccurrence. The independent service undertaking these visits confirmed effective partnership working with the home. The use of physical intervention is rare and only used to protect young people and staff from harm. Restraint recordings have improved. Records now include young people's views and staff evaluate the effectiveness of the measure used. This increases transparency and ensures that their records are compliant with the Children's Home Regulations. However, the manager does not consistently record his evaluation of the incident and this deters the identification of emerging trends, issues of concern, or good practice. The homes risk management and impact assessments do not sufficiently address young people's full range of needs and vulnerabilities, such as, drug use, on-line safety and CSE. Neither do they fully identify the range of strategies for managing	

these risks. Although staff consulted with demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of how to manage risk, their knowledge and expertise is not reflected in the risk assessments. Consequently, current risk assessments do not ensure that all staff have the necessary information, at hand, to support an effective and consistent response to harmful behaviour.

Additionally, staff have not received training on specific safeguarding matters, including, on-line safety, self-harm, drug awareness, and, not all staff have completed the child protection refresher course. Gaps in safeguarding training is impeding staff's knowledge and understanding of such matters, which in turn, affects how they teach young people to keep themselves safe.

Staff do not always follow the day-to-day safety measures put in place to protect young people and staff from harm. On one occasion, a young person injured a member of staff because cleaning materials were not locked away. Furthermore, the injury caused to this member of staff was not documented in the home's records. This does not demonstrate effective health and safety practice or auditing of safety records.

Young people's complaints are appropriately recorded and addressed. They know how to raise their concerns and feel listened to and treated fairly. One said, 'I have made a complaint once about a member of staff. I told staff and it got sorted out, they listened to me.' The home does not have a system in place for logging third party complaints, such as neighbours, social workers or other professionals. To date, this has not been an issue as no such complaints have occurred. However, should a third party wish to make a complaint, there is no effective recording practice in place to ensure and demonstrate fairness and transparency.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
Since the last inspection, there has been some disruption in the management of the home. The Registered Manager has recently been absent and the assistant and a deputy manager have left. Although sufficient alternative arrangements are in place - a deputy manager has stepped up with the support of an assistant manager from another home. These changes have affected the quality of leadership within the home. For example, there have been periods when staff have not received monthly supervision, which, hinders their reflection on practice and professional development.	

Although there is not currently a full permanent staff team, staff overtime and the use of agency workers is sustaining a sufficient level of staff. When possible, the use of regular agency staff is maintaining consistency in care for young people. On a positive note, the company have recently recruited two new workers to fill the vacant posts.

The current permanent team is well established and experienced. Team working and mutual support is a key strength. Staff feel supported and recognise the service strengths and the areas for development, including, recording and risk assessments. They demonstrate enthusiasm to continually improve their practice and care provided.

Not all staff have undertaken the relevant training, as set out in the home's statement of purpose, to ensure they can fully meet the needs of young people. In addition to the gaps in specific safeguarding training, mentioned earlier. Staff have not had the opportunity to broaden their knowledge and skills in risk assessment, recording, first aid, sexual health, or attended a refresher course in health and safety. Consequently, not all staff are fully equipped, or prepared, to meet the diverse range of needs of young people who the service is intended.

Safeguarding concerns, including allegations against staff and child protection referrals are minimal. When they occur, the manager ensures that procedures are followed correctly. Serious incidents are reported to relevant bodies, including placing authorities and Ofsted. This enables swift child protection investigations and external evaluation of the home's response to safeguarding matters.

Effective independent monitoring visits take place monthly. This is driving the service forward by raising areas for improvement and setting clear targets for the manager to action. For example, staff's professional supervision was successfully addressed because of the actions raised at these visits. However, internal monitoring systems are not consistently identifying shortfalls in the home's records, including, the quality of risk assessments and omissions in the home's accident records. This is hindering service development, which in turn, impacts on the quality of care provided in the home.

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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