

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	22/03/2016
Unique reference number	SC366002
Type of inspection	Interim
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	Post vacant
Inspector	Marina Tully

Inspection date	22/03/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Requires improvement
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged requires improvement at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has improved effectiveness. The home went through a difficult period following the last inspection in November 2015. The Registered Manager resigned after a period of long term absence; leaving the team without clear leadership, direction and support. In addition to this, a young person moved into the home without her needs, and the impact on other young people placed, being thoroughly considered. This led to inappropriate matching of need, which resulted in an increase in young people going missing and bullying within the home. During this time, young people's welfare and safety was significantly compromised. In January a new manager was appointed. He was promoted from another company home and, therefore, came with a good understanding of the service and its aims and objectives. He is an open and reflective leader and demonstrates enthusiasm and capacity to continually develop the team and the service. His achievements so far are reflected in a young person's comments, '(manager's name) has turned this home around for the better, he has put in the rules that we needed. We may not like them all but they are fair.' Young people now benefit from effective care planning where their needs and vulnerabilities are identified, considered and matched prior to them moving in. The revised compatibility assessment tool requests more detail, at the referral stage, with regards to young people's needs and behaviour. Although this new assessment tool has yet to be tested; the manager put new admissions on hold to enable the team to take stock and restore a sense of calm within the home. If followed robustly, it will ensure that all placement decisions are sufficiently informed, which in turn, will support placement stability. Working relationships with other professionals, including, local designated safeguarding officers, commissioners, placing authorities and the police have been strengthened. The manager has made great efforts to establish strong links with all relevant professionals and this effective partnership working ensures that all young people's specific and holistic needs are appropriately addressed.	

Most young people progress from their starting points in many aspects of their development. All children's school attendance has improved and most are starting to make noticeable achievements. One young person was very proud about the possibility of him taking his GCSE art exam two years early. Another young person's school report stated that she had an 'excellent attitude' in many of her subjects, including English, which she said she did not like.

Partnership working with specialist health services, such as, the child looked after nurse (CLA) and dietician is helping to promote young people's physical health. The company therapist offers support to young people to address difficult past experiences and this helps them to develop better emotional resilience and self-esteem.

Relationships between staff and young people have clearly improved. Each young person can identify members of staff who they like and trust. These positive relationships are supporting young people to reflect on their behaviour and learn how to keep safe. Consequently, young people's behaviour has improved and risk taking behaviour has decreased. There has been a significant reduction in missing from care and both staff and young people report that the home feels 'calmer' and a safer place to live.

Positive behaviour is encouraged through effective incentive and reward schemes. Although there have only been two restraints used in the home since the last inspection. Restraint records are still not sufficiently detailed to enable thorough evaluation of the measure used or its effectiveness. This recommendation from the last inspection has, therefore, been repeated.

The new manager is suitably qualified and experienced. In a short period of time, he has made recognisable improvements in the day-to-day running of the home and the care provided by the team. Gaps in staff's training are being swiftly addressed. Nearly all mandatory training has been completed and specific training, including, drug awareness, child sexual exploitation and reporting and recording has been sourced. This on-going training is ensuring that staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively promote young people's needs and safety within the home.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a well-supported team. All staff now receive monthly professional supervision as well as attending regular team meetings. This provides them with suitable opportunities to reflect on their practice, develop as a team and plan consistent care. Two new members of staff have been recruited and this has enhanced consistency in care as there is less need to use agency or temporary staff.

The newly appointed manager has introduced new monitoring systems and this is supporting him to maintain good oversight of young people's progress and the quality of care provided. Monthly independent monitoring visits are further enhancing service monitoring and development. The reports from these visits are

consistently detailed and clearly focused on improving the outcomes and experience of young people. Effective internal and external monitoring systems are supporting continued service development and young people's progress.

The home has recently undergone re-decoration and young people have helped to choose the colour schemes. The property is very large with lots of rooms and open space available. Despite it being well maintained, young people report that it lacks a 'homely' feel. The manager acknowledges this and has ideas in mind to address it.

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. A registered school is also on site.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/11/2015	Full	Requires improvement
30/03/2015	Interim	sustained effectiveness
20/08/2014	Full	Adequate
21/02/2014	Interim	Satisfactory Progress

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

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)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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