

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	05/01/2017
Unique reference number	SC372117
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Meadows Care Limited
Registered provider address	Meadows Care Limited, Egerton House, Wardle Road, Rochdale OL12 9EN

Responsible individual	Niel Shelmerdine
Registered manager	Katie Knox
Inspector	Paul Scott

Inspection date	05/01/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
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 last full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness. This home was last inspected in May 2016 and was judged to require improvement. The responsible individual and the organisation have demonstrated a commitment to improving the care and safeguarding arrangements in this home. They have maintained open dialogue with Ofsted and worked closely with inspectors in their efforts to promote a realistic improvement agenda. Some progress is noted on their journey to good although there are still areas of practice that require improvement. There has been notable progress made in addressing the requirements from the previous inspection, which were predominantly staffing and safeguarding related. Staffing arrangements have been improved and there is now in place a team of experienced and mostly qualified staff who are dedicated solely to working in this home. The use of agency staff has reduced significantly and over recent weeks there has been a notable reduction in the number of relief staff covering shifts. The registered manager is making every effort to reduce this further and is planning rotas with this in mind. Forthcoming rotas are looking positive in this respect and are an essential component in ensuring that young people receive good continuity of care which provides stability and a platform on which to build. A number of shortfalls in safeguarding practice were noted at the previous inspection. While many of these have been alleviated due to young people leaving and the subsequent reduction in some risk-taking behaviours, there is evidence of progress generally. Core staff demonstrate a better understanding of their safeguarding roles and responsibilities, including what action to take in response to any emerging concerns, disclosures or allegations. When serious concerns have emerged, the manager has taken effective action including referral to and involvement of external safeguarding agencies and professionals. There is also a notable improvement in how the manager shares information with Ofsted, including the submission of formal notifications following serious events. The main challenge over recent months has been in sustaining long-term stable placements for young people. The predominant periods of success have been when the home has only been occupied by one young person. During these periods of	

solo occupancy, young people have shown signs of improvement in relation to participation in education, improved behaviour and a reduction in risk-taking behaviour. However, these periods have been relatively short-lived and following the admission of a second young person, progress has generally diminished or risks and behaviours have become too difficult to manage. These circumstances have resulted in one young person being moved to another home due to safeguarding concerns and notice being served on another, whose complex needs and behaviour cannot be safely managed.

Two young people have been admitted since the last inspection. The organisation has a department dedicated to considering referrals and matching young people to those already living in the home. Referral information is considered and measured against matching criteria that are provided by the manager of the home, whose views are taken into account when making decisions of suitability. However, this process fell significantly short for the most recent admission which was a late night decision made in the absence of the manager and the placements team. Since their admission, this young person has presented a number of challenges which have continued over the two months that they have been living in the home. Behaviours include frequent and prolonged periods of going missing and aggressive outbursts that have culminated in significant damage throughout the house.

The standard of accommodation needs to improve. The house is not homely and lacks pictures and soft furnishings that have either been damaged or removed. Some areas of the home would benefit from a thorough clean. There are significant signs of wilful damage throughout the home including broken doors, smashed bedroom furniture and lights that have been pulled off the walls. The home's records confirm that damage is reported and repaired as quickly as possible but this is not always sufficient in ensuring that avoidable hazards are removed. For example, the damaged wall lights had been attended to by an electrician on New Year's Day who was asked to temporarily make them safe until permanent repairs could be made. However, on the day of the inspection, it was identified that one of the lights on the landing was still live, and although capped and taped this presented a potential risk to young people. This was immediately rectified during the inspection.

Young people have been admitted with high-risk behaviours including going missing, substance misuse, self-harm and assaults on staff. Good systems are in place for the management of these behaviours, risks and vulnerabilities. This includes links with specialist agencies such as substance intervention teams, the police and mental health specialists. Staff are becoming more confident in managing these types of behaviours and for some young people this has proven effective in reducing risk over time. For others, staff efforts, no matter how creative, do little other than temporarily contain young people's behaviour. For example, going missing from care is the most prolific challenge currently, with one young person persistently going missing, often for long periods of time. In all cases, staff have taken the right action including the involvement of the relevant people and making consistent attempts to secure their return. Staff have tried a

range of strategies in an attempt to break this cycle of behaviour without success. The young person's social worker said, '(Name's) issues are long standing and staff have made every effort to manage his behaviour. They have tried a number of strategies to address his behaviour but have been unsuccessful in their efforts. They are currently working with us to find a better suited placement.'

The manager, who is registered with Ofsted for this and another home, has been in post since April 2016. She is experienced and qualified and has a good understanding of the extent of the work that needs to be done to improve this home. She currently splits her time between the two services but plans are in place for her to resign her other position and focus on the management of this home. This is seen as a positive move given the amount of time and effort required to rebuild. This change will coincide with an increase in the number of young people it can accommodate, subject to approval from Ofsted. The manager has a realistic understanding of the challenges ahead and is fully supported by senior managers from within the organisation who have agreed to put a hold on admissions until all necessary work is completed.

Information about this children's home

This is one of a number of privately run children's homes that provides care and accommodation for up to two young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/05/2016	Full	Requires improvement
21/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
01/07/2015	Full	Good
11/03/2015	Full	Requires improvement

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
6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard the registered person must: (2)(c)(i) ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as meet the needs of each child. This is with specific reference to making the necessary improvements to the environment including the completion of any outstanding repairs.	09/02/2017
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered person must ensure: (2)(d) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to their health. This is with specific reference to ensuring that any repairs are completed to a standard that does not pose a risk to any child.	09/02/2017
14: The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard the registered person must ensure: (2)(a) that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. This is with particular reference to ensuring that relevant people, specifically the registered manager and placements team, are fully involved and consulted before a decision to admit a child is made.	09/02/2017

Recommendations

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

- The registered manager should further reduce the use of relief staff to ensure that continuity of care is promoted. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.15)

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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