

SC372117

Registered provider: Meadows Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

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 who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 May 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
---	-------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
---	------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
---	------

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 5 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because

- Leaders and managers have demonstrated a strong commitment to improving

the care and safeguarding arrangements in this home. They have worked transparently with Ofsted and made considerable progress in addressing the concerning shortfalls identified at previous inspections.

- Management arrangements have been strengthened. The current manager has resigned her registration for her second home and is dedicating her time to the effective promotion of an improvement agenda for this setting.
- A child-focused staff team, that has a good range of experience and skills, has been appointed to work specifically in this home. This has improved the continuity of care provided for young people.
- Young people's views and opinions are highly valued, and their participation in planning their care and making decisions about the day-to-day running of the home is encouraged and promoted.
- Young people benefit from therapeutic support, which increases their emotional stability and enables them to better self-regulate their behaviour.
- Young people's safety is consistently promoted through a range of effective risk management strategies and targeted intervention work that is designed to help them safely manage their known behaviours, risks and vulnerabilities.

The children's home's areas for development

- Some staff are not consistent in their efforts to maintain good routine that promotes the importance of education and learning.
- Not all staff are effective in their efforts to intervene in a timely manner to avoid the escalation of behaviour, which has on a small number of occasions resulted in serious incidents occurring.
- The views of young people are not consistently gathered by the independent visitor and are not represented in the ensuing report.
- Not all staff are implementing the home's procedures for verifying the identity of visitors and ensuring that it is safe for them to be in the home.
- Handovers are not always used effectively to ensure that staff coming on duty are clear about each young person's plans and their role in implementing these.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/05/2016	Full	Requires improvement
21/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
01/07/2015	Full	Good

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers. (Regulation 8(2)(a)(iii)) This is with specific reference to ensuring that staff are consistent in their efforts to maintaining a good routine that promotes the importance of learning for those children who refuse to attend school and are on alternative home-based timetables.	28/06/2017
When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person, if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44(2)(a))	28/06/2017

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to regular scrutiny. Information from that review should be used to develop staff's approach to managing incidents of conflict between young people through early intervention that reduces the potential for escalating behaviour. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46 , paragraph 9.36)
- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. This is with specific reference to ensuring that the identity of all visitors is verified before they are allowed to enter the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality

standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

- The registered person is responsible for leading a team which provides high quality care for all children living in the home. This includes ensuring that staff handovers are sufficiently detailed to ensure that those staff coming on duty are clear about their roles and responsibilities in supporting young people. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The overall levels of care provided in this home have significantly improved since the last full inspection in May 2016. Managers and staff have worked closely with Ofsted to ensure that the serious concerns relating to behaviour and risk management and staffing have been addressed. This has resulted in a much more settled environment and improved continuity of care that is now positively contributing to young people's lives. As a result, the current group of young people is making good progress in many aspects of their lives, relative to their individual starting points.

One young person has left the home since the interim inspection in January 2017 following an exceedingly challenging period. This was a significant turning point and resulted in the opportunity for the remaining young person to settle and for staff to re-establish good routine. One young person has been admitted. Procedures for matching admissions have been improved to ensure that the home only admits young people whose needs can be fully met without detriment to those already living in the home. This, combined with a well-thought out and inclusive introductory period, has resulted in a well-matched group that now benefits from well-planned care that is personalised to their individual and specific needs. This care is underpinned by increasingly positive relationships that provide a foundation for stability and develop a sense of belonging. A great deal of effort has gone into creating a caring and supportive environment where young people feel valued and respected. One young person said, 'This is a 'sick' house. They (staff) give me respect even if I don't always show respect to them. If I worked for Ofsted I would give them outstanding.'

There are many opportunities for young people to express their views through individual sessions, everyday discussions, house meetings and involvement in staff meetings. It is clear that staff are interested in what young people have to say and that their views and opinions are integral to the day-to-day running of the home. Young people know how to raise concerns and are confident that they are listened to and taken seriously by staff. They are encouraged to take an interest in their care plans, and have their own child-friendly version of these. Staff help young people to prepare for and attend important meetings which ensures that their views, wishes and feelings are fully represented. An independent reviewing officer said, '(Name) is fully supported to attend her review, and her wishes and feelings are taken into account when making decisions about her care.'

They provide a good service and make sure her needs are met.'

Young people are encouraged and supported to maintain good physical and emotional health and well-being. Staff regularly talk to young people about the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and offer good support in helping them do this through diet and exercise. They monitor each young person's health and enable them to attend routine and specialist appointments. They are creative in helping young people overcome the obstacles to maintaining good health. For example, staff have allowed one young person to attend and observe their personal dentals appointments. Overtime it is hoped that this will help the young person overcome their individual fears around going to the dentist.

Young people have exceedingly strong relationships with the therapist who provides young people with an individually tailored package of support that is helping them to manage their emotions and better regulate their behaviour. She plays a major role in developing behaviour management plans, and supports staff in the application of agreed strategies. Social workers consistently acknowledge this input as being a major strength in helping young people understand and adjust their behavioural responses. One social worker said, 'The therapeutic side is amazing. It is a big deal that (name) has engaged so well and is starting to understand her own issues.'

The manager is clear about her responsibilities in promoting education. She has worked closely with education professionals in her efforts to overcome barriers to participation. This has been effective in supporting one young person to improve their attendance and make good progress relative to their individual ability and starting point. The manager and staff recognise the importance of understanding why young people struggle to positively participate in formal education, and good work is ongoing in this respect. For example, one young person is on a 'creative timetable' which is designed to provide a flexible approach to delivering in-house education, while assessments are completed and therapeutic input given. However, not all staff are consistently persistent in their efforts to maintain a good routine that supports this programme such as getting up on time for school and not being allowed to watch TV as an alternative to learning.

Staff are aware of the benefits that young people gain from engaging in positive recreational and social experiences. They make every effort to source purposeful and age-appropriate leisure activities that are based on each young person's individual hobbies, interests and needs. One young person said, as she was preparing to go to the gym, 'If you are interested in things, staff sort it for you. I am building up trust so that I can spend more time with my friends in my home area.'

Staff recognise the importance of family relationships and do their best to support these when safe to do so. They work closely with social workers to ensure that the parameters and arrangements for safe and purposeful contact are agreed, and that they are in the best interests of the young person.

The standard of accommodation has significantly improved, making the house much more homely than seen at previous inspections. A number of areas have been

redecorated and furniture replaced. Young people have been encouraged to personalise their bedrooms, and for those who have chosen to do so, this it has been done to a good standard. There is an absence of pictures and soft furnishings in communal areas due to the propensity of one young person to cause deliberate damage when upset. Staff are working on this behaviour by encouraging the young person to be involved in the general maintenance of the home as well as helping to repair the damage.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Young people confirm that they feel safe, and that if they had any concerns they could talk to a number of staff, including the manager. Staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and are conscientious in the application of these. They know young people well and fully understand how to manage their individual risks and vulnerabilities, which are clearly outlined in young people's comprehensive and regularly updated plans and risk assessments. They talk to young people about how to keep themselves safe and address any areas of concern through the creative use of project work and targeted one-to-one sessions. This helps young people understand their own behaviour and develop a concept of what will potentially make them unsafe. For example, one young person spoke about the risks associated with sexual exploitation and how to keep yourself safe when online. This educational approach, combined with high levels of supervision and support, means that young people are generally making good choices when it comes to keeping themselves safe.

Robust responses are in place in the event of a young person going missing, including individualised reporting protocols with the police. Since the interim inspection, there has been one reported absence that was managed effectively to secure a safe return to the home. The views of the young person were sought following the incident and action taken to reduce any further occurrences.

The organisation has good links with a number of safeguarding agencies and professionals, including the police, the team to counter child sexual exploitation and the substance misuse service. The need for these types of service has been minimal for the current group of young people who generally refrain from serious risk-taking behaviour.

Positive links are also maintained with the local authority children's safeguarding team who are generally positive about the home's approach to managing allegations and safeguarding concerns. Since the interim inspection, there has been a small number of concerns, including two allegations and one of a child protection nature. In all cases, the manager and staff have put measures in place to ensure that the young person's safety and well-being is maintained while facts relating to the incident can be verified. However, relevant information has not always been shared with the local authority safeguarding team in an expedient manner. This concern was raised by Ofsted with senior managers and the organisation's designated safeguarding lead. The designated safeguarding lead has taken action to address this shortfall. She has consulted with the local authority and revised the organisation's policies and procedures to ensure that they reflect the expectations of the local authority safeguarding protocols. Easy-to-follow guidance has been issued to all managers who are now clear about the expectation to

share information in a timely manner.

Staff make good use of individually tailored incentives and rewards to encourage and reinforce positive behaviour. They recognise the importance of praising success and are keen to acknowledge when young people succeed, using verbal affirmation and writing comments in the young people's 'positive pages books'. Young people respond well to this and are gradually making improvements in self-regulating their behaviour.

Staff take a non-confrontational approach to challenging negative behaviour, and the use of sanctions is rare. However, staff are not always proactive at recognising and responding to signs that negative behaviour is escalating. This has on a small number of occasions resulted in young people assaulting each other and serious incidents escalating to the point of requiring physical intervention and/or police support. One social worker said, 'I don't feel that staff are always in control, and they could stop some things before they escalate.' Written records of these incidents are kept and information is reviewed by the manager. However, this information is not being used to its full potential to develop staff's approach to managing incidents of conflict between young people.

The organisation's recruitment procedures continue to be effective in recruiting the right staff for the job. The interview process is purposefully challenging and includes an interview with young people. One young person who was clearly proud of her involvement in recruiting staff was keen to demonstrate her role by interviewing the inspector. Procedures are in place for managing visitors to the home and, on the whole, these are followed. However, on the day of the inspection the member of staff, who was an agency worker, failed to ask the inspector for identification before allowing them into the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is run by a suitably qualified and experienced registered manager. She took up post in April 2016 at a time when the home was facing a number of challenges. With the support of the responsible individual and senior managers, she has worked hard to rebuild the service, including the developing of a stable team of staff that now delivers a consistently good standard of care to young people.

The manager no longer has responsibility for the management of a second home, having resigned her registration in January 2017. This is in line with plans to increase the occupancy of this home from two to three young people. This is a positive change that has enabled her to focus her efforts solely on this home. This means that she is more visible to staff and is able to spend more time supporting them in their day-to-day practice. More pertinently, she is playing a more participative role in the care of young people. Comments from the young people and staff confirm this, with one young person saying, 'Katie is always around when you need her.'

Suitable action has been taken to address the three requirements and one recommendation made at the last inspection. The process for managing referrals has

been strengthened and used effectively to match the current group of young people. The standard of accommodation has improved, and all aspects of the environment made safe. The manager's efforts to further reduce the use of relief and agency staff have continued and have been beneficial in improving the continuity of care for young people.

Young people are making good progress as a result of staff efforts, which have been effective in helping them settle and find some sense of stability in their complex lives. This is because they are cared for by a permanent and stable team of staff that shares the same child-focused aspirations as the manager. Staff confirm that they are well supported in their day-to-day practice and that they receive regular supervision that is beneficial to their individual and professional development. A range of mandatory and needs-led training is available and ensures that staff have the necessary skills to effectively support the young people in their care. The manager recognises the need to develop some aspects of behaviour management and is working closely with the therapist in this respect. The therapist said, 'The manager is highly reflective and wants the best for the young people. This is an area that we can work on together and will be of benefit to everyone, in particular the young people.'

Monitoring activity is generally good. The manager effectively uses a range of internal quality assurance processes to monitor and analyse the home's performance in improving young people's experiences and progress. She has a good understanding of what the home does well, and uses past experiences to further improve care practice in the home. External monitoring and scrutiny from senior managers and the independent visitor offers additional rigour, and ensures that shortfalls are identified and addressed. However, there is very little evidence within the independent visitor's report to suggest that they are consistent in their efforts to seek the views of young people. This is a missed opportunity to consider the views of young people when amending and improving standard practice.

Staff have a good understanding of each young person's needs, and well written records and plans outline how these will be met. These plans are regularly updated and followed by staff, recognising young people as individuals with different backgrounds, interests and needs. Staff use forums such as team meetings and daily handovers to discuss young people's needs and to identify how they can best support each young person in line with their care plan. Handover time is allocated at the beginning of each shift to allow any emerging issues to be shared and plans for the day confirmed. These are recorded electronically and available to staff through their individual login details. However, on the day of the inspection the staff member was unable to access this information and it soon became clear that the verbal handover he had received about the young person he was caring for was inadequate. For example, he was unable to explain to the inspector the plan for the young person he was looking after, including his education timetable. This lack of focus meant that the young person was left in bed until lunchtime, although welfare checks were undertaken.

The manager and staff have good links with relatives, social workers and a range of different agencies who all contribute to young people's care. Feedback from professionals is exceedingly positive and confirms that a collaborative approach is taken

to meeting each young person's needs. One social worker said 'I am really happy with how they support (name). They keep me informed and are very solution focused. They are willing to listen and it feels like we are all working together.'

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC372117

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Meadows Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Meadows Care Ltd, Egerton House, Wardle Road,
Rochdale OL12 9EN

Responsible individual: Niel Shelmerdine

Registered manager: Katie Knox

Inspector

Paul Scott, social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017