

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	24 May 2016
Unique reference number	SC372117
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Meadows Care Limited
Registered provider address	Egerton House, Wardle Road, Rochdale OL12 9EN

Responsible individual	Niel Shelmerdine
Registered manager	Vacant post
Inspector	Ceri Evans

Inspection date	24 May 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	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

SC372117

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- The service does not consistently promote young people's safety. This is due to a lack of consistent staff who do not know the young people and their complex needs and behaviours.
- Responses to risk-taking behaviour is inconsistent. Not all staff follow safeguarding procedures. This means that young people have been at risk of harm.
- Some staff are not sufficiently skilled or competent to meet the needs of young people.
- Staff do not always fully implement their responsibility for maintaining the well-being of all young people by adhering to risk assessments.
- Heavy reliance on the use of agency staff and non-core staff to cover shifts has impacted on the well-being of young people and staff morale.
- Procedures are in place to ensure that relevant professionals and agencies are informed of significant events. However, this system is not robust. In the absence of the manager, staff have failed to notify partner agencies and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) of information pertaining to the protection of children.
- Young people do not make sufficient progress with their education. Their attendance has been inconsistent. That said, records demonstrate some improvement in recent weeks. This is because the service has implemented a re-engagement plan.

The children's home strengths

- The organisation has appointed an experienced manager. She has been in post since April 2016. In the few weeks she has been in post, she has been able to demonstrate some progress in the home.
- Leaders and managers recognise weaknesses in areas of practice and are working hard to address them.
- Staff spoken to during the inspection recognise that the home has had some increased challenges of late. Nevertheless, they continue to express commitment and enthusiasm for their role and genuinely want the best for the young people in their care.
- The staff encourage young people to have interests and to take part in activities.

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, the registered provider must ensure that— (2)(a)(i) staff 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.	7 July 2016
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered provider must ensure that— (2)(a)(v) staff understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person.	7 July 2016
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered provider must ensure that— (2) (a)(vi) staff take effective action wherever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare.	7 July 2016
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must ensure that —	7 July 2016

(2)(c) staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.	
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must— (2)(e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child.	7 July 2016
40: Notification of a serious event The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if a child protection enquiry is instigated or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considered to be serious. (Regulation 4(4)(d)(e))	7 July 2016

Recommendations

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

- Provide a homely environment. In particular, ensure that the home is well maintained and decorated ("Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards", page 15, paragraph 3.9).

Full report

Information about this children's home

- This is a privately run children's home that provides care and accommodation for up to two young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21 January 2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
1 July 2015	Full	Good
11 March 2015	Full	Requires improvement
		Adequate
10 September 2014	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Requires improvement
There are inconsistencies within the staff team due to the regular use of agency staff and staff from other homes regularly covering shifts. Consequently, young people fail to make strong and trusting relationships with staff, which impacts on their emotional resilience and ability to form positive attachments. The management of behaviour by staff is inconsistent. Young people have an individual behaviour management plan and staff are provided with specific guidance on how to manage the individual behaviour of young people. However, staff do not consistently follow this guidance. As a result, young people's behaviour has been very challenging: for example, causing damage around the home, barricading themselves in each other's bedrooms and antisocial behaviour. This inconsistent approach fails to enable young people to understand the impact of their behaviour and does not promote their well-being. Currently educational outcomes are adequate. That said, there is a clear expectation that young people attend school and staff are persistent in their efforts to ensure that they attend regularly. Professionals confirm effective communication between home and school and alternative education providers are quickly identified to counter any unplanned difficulties. Since the departure of some young people, the current young person in placement is beginning to settle and there is evidence that his school attendance has started to improve. While this is early days, his improved engagement will enhance his learning and lead to improved progress over time. Care planning arrangements are good. Placement, behaviour management and healthcare plans are individualised and offer a good level of detail. Records are routinely updated, and changes including revised risk analysis and behaviour trackers are completed. Similarly, young people benefit from regular one-to-one sessions to address the aims of the placement, behaviours or areas for concern. This provides a clear structure to assist young people to make changes in their lives and to help them to achieve their placement objectives. No complaints have been made during this inspection period. However, young people spoken with during the inspection were clear about how to make a complaint should they have any concerns. Regular consultation with the manager and attendance at team meetings ensures that young people are given opportunities to express their views and opinions.	

Staff ensure that young people have every opportunity to enjoy a wide range of activities with their friends and family: for example, day trips to places of interest, visits to the local skate parks and meals out. This helps nurture individual interests, and promote confidence and social skills, as well as providing the young people with experiences and opportunities similar to those of their peers.

The home environment is steadily improving. The service has an ongoing repairs and maintenance programme. Some redecoration and repair work has been undertaken. However, further work is required. This includes ongoing redecoration throughout the home and repainting exposed plaster. The manager has acknowledged that further work is required in order to maintain a homely environment.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Staff do not keep young people consistently safe. They lack awareness of safeguarding policies and procedures. For example, when young people have made disclosures, staff have not responded to these concerns appropriately and have not informed the placing authority or Ofsted in a timely manner. This does not prioritise the safety of young people. In addition, it hinders professionals from effectively carrying out their safeguarding responsibilities to ensure that young people are protected from harm. There are clear risk-management plans in place. However, staff do not ensure that these are consistently followed on a day-to-day basis. For example, a member of staff handed vehicle keys to a young person. This resulted in the young person attempting to start the car and reverse out of a car park. This extremely poor decision-making does not promote young people's safety and places them at risk of harm. More positively, the manager took immediate action following this incident to minimise the risk of this happening again. Young people are encouraged to behave positively, and individualised incentive charts have been implemented to help them achieve this. However, the effectiveness of behaviour management strategies is variable. Not all staff are as confident or competent in dealing with these issues. For example, staff receive training in how to manage challenging behaviour. However, there have been incidents of 'play fighting' between young people. Staff have not been proactive in sending consistent messages to the young people that this is not acceptable. As a result, young people are vulnerable to physical harm. Missing from home has been a concerning feature in this home, with some young people going missing on almost a daily basis. However, since the departure of some young people, missing episodes have started to reduce. Records	

demonstrate that when missing episodes do occur, staff promptly implement policies and procedures, go out looking for the young people and encourage them to return. The manager has sufficiently escalated concerns with the placing authority and has been proactive in arranging multi-agency risk management strategy meetings. This ensures an agreed multi-agency response to concerns to promote the safety of young people.

In light of recent staffing issues, the organisation has implemented a more robust recruitment and selection process for new staff. This includes a more robust interview process for new starters, retaining clear profiles of agency staff and ensuring that each person in the home has been suitably checked and vetted. Improved systems ensure that as much as possible is done to verify the suitability of people working in the home.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
There has been a change in manager since the last inspection. A new manager has been appointed and has been in post since April 2016. She is suitably experienced and qualified for the role. Staff and young people spoken with during the inspection express satisfaction at the support they receive from the manager. Comments include 'Katie has come in to the team and put a lot of hours in. I certainly feel supported and I know she's available if needed.' There has been some positive progress in leadership and management. However, there continues to be some shortfalls in behaviour management and safeguarding young people. Over the last three months, the service has not been able to provide stable staffing to the young people in its care. Agency workers and staff from sister homes have been used because of staff sickness and vacancies. The provider is in the process of recruiting more staff, but the impact of this is yet to be evaluated. Since the manager's appointment, she has worked determinedly to stabilise young people and the staff team. The manager has a good understanding of what needs to improve and has implemented a rigorous development plan to drive the service forward. Mandatory training, such as in behaviour management and safeguarding, is up to date. However, the implementation of the training requires improvement. Some staff are not adequately skilled to meet the complex needs of young people. Since her appointment, the manager has ensured that staff receive regular supervision and she is quick to rectify any practice issues that arise. Partnership working continues to be a strength. The manager has effective working relationships with the police, drug and alcohol services, placing authorities and education. She has a good understanding of the benefits of multi-agency working	

to promote young people's overall wellbeing.

The manager has introduced new systems to monitor young people's progress in all areas of their lives. This includes behaviour analysis, more in-depth overview of missing episodes and careful monitoring of educational attendance and achievement. This will enable staff to focus appropriate support in areas of weakness.

The statement of purpose and children's guide provide good information about the home's aims and objectives for young people, their families and placing authorities. This ensures that stakeholders are clear about what service they can expect to receive. Records are stored securely and overall provide good accounts of young people's placement journeys.

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 children looked after 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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