

SC379357

Registered provider: Castle Homes Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to accommodate three children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It offers short-term, long-term and emergency placements. The home is part of a large private children's care organisation.

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 July 2017

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

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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.

Date of last inspection: 9 November 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- Individual, location and impact risk assessments are not strong enough.
- Placement plans are not consistently up to date or accurate. The staff are not signing to say they have read these plans.
- Plans in relation to missing children are not always fully adhered to.
- The staff are not consistently receiving supervisions at the expected frequency.
- One member of staff has not completed their level 3 qualification in the expected time frame. Another member of staff did not receive physical intervention training promptly.
- The home's policies and procedures are not clear enough about what to do if a child alleges that they were hurt during a physical intervention.
- The manager has not notified Ofsted of some serious incidents at the home.
- There has been confusion over contact arrangements for some children.
- There is a lack of up-to-date knowledge of emerging safeguarding concerns that are linked to e-safety.

The children's home's strengths:

- The staff and the manager know the children well.
- The children are making progress in their education.
- An independent person visits the home and completes thorough and challenging monitoring reports.
- Professionals are generally positive about the service and the quality of care that is provided by the staff and the manager.
- When children go missing, the staff are determined in their efforts to contact them. These efforts have resulted in children being located and returned to the home.
- The staff manage behaviour without routine recourse to physical interventions.
- The manager attends local community meetings and the staff are aware of the content and relevance of these.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/11/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
25/05/2016	Full	Requires improvement
23/03/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
13/10/2015	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(s) 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(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that 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, and help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii))	07/08/2017
The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14(1)(a)(b)(2)(c))	07/08/2017
The registered person must ensure that an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification, the level 3 diploma for residential childcare (England) ('the level 3 diploma'), or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the level 3 diploma, by the relevant date. (Regulation 32(4)(5))	31/12/2017
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(a)(b)(5)(a)(b))	31/08/2017
The registered person must set out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular, describe the measures which may be necessary to protect children following an allegation of abuse or neglect, and describe how and to whom staff are to report, without delay, any concern about abuse or neglect of a child. (Regulation 34(1)(2)(e)(f))	31/08/2017
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.	07/08/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that the staff, including the management team, have the knowledge and skills to recognise and be alert to any signs that might indicate a child is in any way at risk of harm. The registered person should ensure that skills in safeguarding are gained, refreshed and recorded in the home's workforce plan. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.12)

This is with particular regard to maintaining up-to-date knowledge of emerging safeguarding concerns linked to e-safety.

- Ensure that all staff have been adequately trained in the principles of restraint and any restraint techniques appropriate to the needs of the children the home is set up to care for as defined in the home's statement of purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.57)

This is with particular regard to ensuring that staff have timely access to physical intervention training.

- Ensure that impact risk assessments fully consider the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- Ensure that the annual review of the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises is accurate and includes up-to-date information. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The children receive care from a staff team that knows them well. The staff form good relationships with the children. A child said, 'The staff are nice. They are kind, respectful and know what they are doing. They know me well.' The staff understand the children and work hard to provide them with stability. Recently, however, the children have experienced a turbulent time at the home. This has resulted in children's placements ending. In one instance, the ending was abrupt. Consequently, children have not experienced enough stability or consistency.

The manager undertakes impact risk assessments. These assessments consider whether the home can meet a child's needs. The most recent impact risk assessment was

thorough, but was overly optimistic about the potential effect of the child's arrival. This undue optimism could increase the chances of children being placed at the home inappropriately.

The manager has updated the home's location risk assessment, but there are errors in it. As a result, the document does not offer an accurate picture of the home. Also, up-to-date feedback has not been sought from partner agencies. This limits the relevance of the information in the document.

Professionals report that the staff and manager work hard to enable family contact. These professionals say that the staff and manager are flexible and supportive. However, there have been instances when contact arrangements have been problematic. In one case, there was a misunderstanding about whether a child could take their phone to contact. The home's records about contact arrangements are not sufficiently detailed. They do not clearly capture what is expected. This increases the potential for mistakes and misunderstanding.

Some of the children make some progress. One child said, '[I have] been here a year. Got free time. Education is good. I've been more respectful. Been less harmful.' However, sometimes this progress is not adequately sustained. One child made significant initial progress. He made improvements in managing his emotions and his behaviour. However, during the past two months, his behaviour has deteriorated significantly. This has culminated in his arrest and his placement ending.

There are some opportunities for children to develop their independence. These are limited by restrictions arising from safeguarding concerns. However, one child has achieved greater independence, and spoke of this with pride.

The children both attend education. This reflects progress for both of them. Neither child had engaged with education before their arrival at the home. One child now attends school regularly and achieves positive results in his studies. Education professionals are positive about the work that the home does. One professional said about the manager, 'She knows the kids very well. They have an amazing relationship. She has a way with them.' Another professional said, 'They [staff] are really supportive. We have lots of conversations, they are fantastic.'

The staff ensure that children register with health providers and they support the children to access emergency appointments. This has resulted in children receiving care for previously undiagnosed conditions.

The children contribute to day-to-day decisions. They influence what is cooked, they choose items for their bedrooms and they choose their activities. The children are made aware of advocacy services.

The children access a range of leisure opportunities. The staff support them to pursue activities that interest them.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The staff and manager complete a range of risk assessments for the children. These are not always strong enough. Risk assessment updates are not always read or signed by the staff. There have been two recent incidents relating to knives. In one of these incidents, the staff found that two children had knives in their rooms. The incident was not reflected in the risk assessments. The response to this incident was insufficient. For example, there was no system for checking the number of knives at the home. This does not safeguard children or staff as far as is reasonably practical.

There is insufficient work undertaken with children on internet safety. This is despite children expressing a natural interest in the internet. The management team lacks knowledge of emerging safeguarding concerns that are linked to e-safety. This lessens the likelihood that managers will be alert to some of the indicators that children may be at risk.

The staff work with children who are at risk of going missing. When children do go missing, the staff are tenacious in their attempts to contact them. Missing-from-home protocols are agreed with placing social workers. The protocols include timescales for reporting the children to the police as missing. Yet the staff have not always adhered to these timescales. However, the staff team's persistence has led to children returning to the home. The staff encourage the children to complete independent return home interviews. The manager ensures that she receives a copy of any interview. This provides the staff and manager with valuable information about incidents in which children have been missing from home.

The staff manage behaviour without routine recourse to physical interventions. The staff attempt to defuse situations using a variety of methods. When the staff do use physical interventions, they complete comprehensive records. Yet the corresponding policies and procedures are unclear. They do not outline what to do if a child is hurt during a physical intervention. This does not provide the staff with the direction and clarity they need.

The children can identify staff with whom they can share concerns and they have generally good relationships with external professionals. The staff are aware of how to raise concerns and they know who the senior managers are within the organisation. The staff report the senior managers to be accessible and understanding.

Fire safety is good. The manager ensures that regular fire tests take place, and that the fire risk assessment is updated annually. The manager takes prompt action to address shortcomings. Regular evacuations take place. The staff and manager induct new children into the fire drill procedure. The staff have fire safety training.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The manager has been in post for one year. She has the confidence of her staff team. The staff feel that the manager supports them, and that she has overseen improvements

since taking over. The manager has a level 4 qualification in residential childcare. She continues to attend courses that are relevant to her professional development.

Until recently, the deputy manager post was vacant. As a result, there was a shortfall in the capacity of the management team to maintain a good quality of service in areas such as supervision. The manager has not provided all of the staff with supervision at the expected frequency. This has led to some staff frustration. Lack of regular supervision does not provide the staff with the guidance that they need when they most need support.

The staff are able to access to a range of training courses. All of the staff except the newest member have had physical intervention training. The new staff member has not been able to access this training in a timely way. This is despite the volatility at the home and the fact that he is a permanent member of staff. He has to deal with and manage aggressive and dangerous incidents. Again, this does not provide the staff with the support that they need when they most need it.

The manager notifies Ofsted of most of the serious incidents at the home. However, the manager did not notify Ofsted when children recently went missing for long periods of time, including overnight. While this has had no effect on the quality of care, it does affect Ofsted's ability to regulate the service.

One member of staff has not completed his diploma level 3 training in childcare in the expected timescale. This was due to a historical oversight. The manager identified this during an audit of training records and qualifications. She has ensured that the member of staff is now undertaking this qualification.

The manager has addressed the requirement made at the last inspection. Rotas now contain greater detail of who has actually worked on each shift at the home. However, the previous recommendation is not met. The staff do not consistently sign documents to confirm that they understand them. These documents include risk assessments, placement plans and policies and procedures. In addition, there are elements of the placement plans that are out of date. For example, one young person's placement plan refers to 'no cannabis use since arriving'. This has not been accurate for a couple of months.

An independent person undertakes monthly monitoring visits to the home. The visits are thorough, identify issues and provide strong challenge for the service. The visits and the reports have the potential to make a significant contribution to the necessary improvements. The visitor ensures that Ofsted receives the reports promptly. This enables Ofsted as the regulator to carry out its role effectively.

The manager attends local community meetings. Other local children's home managers and the local police also attend. The meetings provide valuable information about local issues and areas of concern. The staff are aware of these issues and of people whose involvement with the children could cause concern.

Feedback from external professionals is generally positive. A social worker said, 'I find them [staff] very welcoming. When I get there, I do not feel like I am a visitor. It is very relaxed. They give feedback. I get all of the information I need.' An independent reviewing officer stated, 'The place was well presented. The staff were great and well informed. It was a good atmosphere, and while she [child] had not been there very long, she gave positive feedback. They [staff] were very engaged in facilitating contact. They were very engaged in supporting education. I found them very good.' Another social worker reflected, 'They are very compassionate. They are very flexible.'

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: SC379357

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Castle Homes Care Ltd

Registered provider address: 80 Hammersmith Road, London W14 8UD

Responsible individual: James Imber

Registered manager: Michelle Batchelor

Inspector

Ashley Hinson: social care inspector

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