

SC381339

Registered provider: Social Care Services (Clayton) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a private organisation. It provides care for four children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 December 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: 14 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The leadership and management of the home have significantly improved following the appointment of a new manager who has high aspirations for the

children and high expectations of the staff team.

- All shortfalls identified at the last inspection have been addressed and the standard of accommodation and care is now good.
- The dedicated staff team is very well supervised, supported and led. Reflective practice and ongoing training are key to developing staff skills. This enables the team to provide good-quality care.
- Children benefit from good routines, clear boundaries and nurturing care. They enjoy positive experiences, feel well cared for and make good, all-round developmental progress.
- Children's views are central to their care.
- The home works well in partnership with other agencies. Effective communication and professional challenge ensure that children receive the services they need.
- Effective safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. This promotes and protects children's safety and welfare.
- The home appropriately notifies serious incidents to relevant bodies, including Ofsted.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The home does not differentiate well between sanctions and incentives. Consequently, incentive schemes do not always involve rewards that are over and above what a child should be able to expect as part of day-to-day living. The home does not recognise that it is issuing sanctions, and is therefore not recording them.
- The home does not always make safe arrangements for children who are out in the community to return home safely late at night. Although no child has been harmed by this practice, it undermines children's safety and the otherwise good safeguarding measures.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/02/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
08/11/2016	Full	Good
24/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/11/2015	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that staff support children to be aware of and manage their own safety both inside and outside the home to the extent that any good parent would. Staff should help children to understand how to protect themselves, feel protected and be protected from significant harm. In particular, staff should take reasonable precautions and make informed professional judgements, based on the child's individual needs and stage of development, about when to allow a child to take a particular risk, including travelling home alone, through known high-crime areas, late at night. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraphs 9.7, 9.9)
- Ensure that staff understand the system for rewarding and celebrating positive behaviour and recognise where children have managed situations well. In particular, ensure that incentives include rewards that are over and above what a child should normally expect as part of their day-to-day care; and that any restriction on playing with toys and games, which is a consequence of a child's behaviour, is appropriately recorded as a sanction. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 47, paragraphs 9.38, 9.39)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home has reduced the number of children for whom it provides accommodation from six to four. This means that staff are better able to focus on meeting the needs of each individual child. The home no longer takes emergency placements and the manager carries out more robust impact risk assessments on children referred. This gives the home greater control over the compatibility of children and the impact of newly placed children on those already in placement. Consequently, the three children in placement are suitably matched.

Individually tailored placement plans are agreed with the placing authority and are regularly reviewed. They provide staff with a clear plan, which focuses on the child's specific needs. The home responds well to children's individual and diverse needs. The home supports staff to understand children's complex health and emotional needs, by arranging training from expert professionals. This helps staff to develop their competence and to deliver bespoke packages of care.

The home provides good-quality, nurturing care and children are relaxed and settled. One child explained: 'It's really nice here. All the staff are nice. They look after us well.' Relationships between staff and children are good. A partner professional said: 'They are really good staff. They are very positive and really nice with the child. He gives positive

feedback about them all.'

The home continually consults children about their care and day-to-day experiences and keeps them fully informed of decisions that affect their lives. This helps children to make effective, valuable contributions to their own plans. Children appreciate that staff are honest and open with them. They say that they can talk to staff about any worries or concerns they might have.

Children make good overall progress across all areas of their development. Education, health and social work professionals confirm that the home communicates well with them and supports children very well, enabling good progress. For example, an education provider said: 'They are absolutely superb. His attendance and behaviour are much improved since he went there. His engagement is miles better now... their communication with us is excellent.'

Children enjoy a range of positive experiences, which enhance their daily lives. They enjoy outings and activities tailored to meet their interests and needs, such as canoeing, football and cycling. They develop social skills and self-esteem through engaging in group activities and learning new skills. One child was proud to win a school award for having the most improved behaviour throughout the year.

Transitions to and from the home are well managed. Newly placed children are made welcome, and through a planned period of induction, staff make sure that children understand the routines and expectations of the home. Children develop their self-care skills and independence that equip them well for the future. Even when children move from the home at short notice, they are well supported by staff.

The looked after children nurse has delivered training to the staff team around promoting and protecting the health of children who are asthmatic and require rescue medication. As a result, staff have a better understanding of how to care for those children. A professional from the child and adolescent mental health service attends team meetings, providing advice and guidance that help staff to better understand and respond to individual children's complex emotional and psychological needs.

In partnership with health professionals and specialist advisers, the home works hard to help children who misuse substances to reduce their reliance on drugs and cigarettes. There are early signs of success in this, but the home remains vigilant.

Children who have committed crimes, or are on the edge of criminal activity are very well supported through good communication between the home and the police and youth justice service. Staff accompany children to court and ensure that they have the opportunity to see the courtroom and are well prepared for a court appearance. This helps to reduce children's anxieties, which, in turn, helps them to present themselves in a positive light.

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

The quality of children's individual risk assessments and risk management plans has improved. Consequently, action taken in response to challenging behaviour is based on an up-to-date assessment of each child's known vulnerabilities. The assessment takes proper account of children's welfare and dignity and helps staff to protect young people from harming themselves or others.

The home has been extensively renovated so that children enjoy homely, well-appointed accommodation that is clean, safe and well maintained. Damage is quickly repaired. Through regular monitoring of services and safety measures, the home protects and promotes children's physical health and safety.

Good recruitment practice helps to prevent unsuitable people from being recruited and having the opportunity to harm children. Staff are familiar with child protection and whistle-blowing procedures and are confident in the provider's response to any concerns they might have. On-call managers are consistently available to provide advice and assistance in the event of an emergency, serious incident or disclosure of abuse. There have been no allegations, disclosures of abuse or child protection concerns.

Through prompt and careful monitoring of incidents, the manager maintains a good overview of behaviour management strategies employed. She encourages good reflection, which helps staff to understand children's behaviour and the impact of their responses. In addition, staff have regular access to expertise and guidance from specialist advisers, including mental health specialists. This further supports them to manage children's behaviour effectively and in accordance with their own individual needs. Restraint is used only where necessary to prevent significant harm or damage.

Staff consistently enforce clear boundaries and good routines. This provides children with a sense of well-being, order and security, so that they feel safe and know the expectations of the home. The level of aggressive and destructive behaviour has reduced a great deal.

Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. The home appropriately notifies serious incidents to parents and relevant bodies, including Ofsted, and contributes effectively to good multi-agency partnership working. This protects children from harm. Parents report that their child is 'totally safe' and describe relationships between staff and children as 'brilliant'.

Staff respond effectively and quickly to serious incidents that threaten children's safety and welfare. For example, staff take immediate action in response to self-injurious behaviour, and maintain frequent contact with children who are in the community unsupervised. Their robust responses protect children from long-term harm and prevent them from being drawn into criminality and dangerous activities. They search for missing children and often find them and bring them home. Their interventions and advice have successfully deterred children from developing relationships with dangerous people. This robust response is undermined when, on occasion, children are refused a lift home from

unsupervised outings in the city centre, late at night. For example, on one occasion a child phoned for a lift but staff instructed him to make his own way home. He did not arrive back until the early hours of the morning and had to pass through an area known for its high crime rates. Although the child came to no harm, this practice did not promote his safety.

The home uses incentive schemes to encourage children to develop good habits and improved self-control. While these are mostly effective, they do not always take full account of a child's anxieties resulting from situations beyond their control, and the impact of these on the child's behaviour. This means that rewards are sometimes beyond a child's reach.

The distinction between incentives and sanctions is not wholly understood and maintained. Consequently, some sanctions are not clearly recorded, and incentives are not always rewards that are over and above normal expectations. For example, in line with his placement plan, on return from school, a child is allowed to play with a particular toy only if he has achieved agreed targets set by school. Preventing a child from accessing his preferred method of relaxation with his own toys is not recognised as a sanction, even though there are otherwise no pre-set time limits on his use of these play materials.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A monitoring visit was made to the home in March 2017. The provider had made satisfactory progress in addressing the many shortfalls identified at the last inspection. This included the appointment of a new manager from March 2017. She is suitably experienced and has a history of managing homes that provide good-quality care. She has driven significant improvements in the operation of the home.

The shortfalls in the service identified at the last inspection have all been addressed. Consequently, the quality of care to children is very much improved. The provider has reviewed the statement of purpose and has kept Ofsted informed of changes to the service. A copy of the new statement of purpose has been submitted to Ofsted. The home is meeting the aims and objectives laid out in the statement of purpose.

The manager's clear vision and high expectations of the staff team play a key role in developing the ethos of the home and the skills of staff. The manager and senior staff have a good understanding of children's individual, diverse needs and monitor their progress effectively. Through encouragement and close supervision, they enable staff to take an active part in decisions about the home and children's care. This promotes a sense of responsibility, commitment and belonging within the staff team. It also creates a culture of high aspirations, in which children thrive. A member of staff explained: 'She empowers people to do things. We are learning new skills; we know more about the children now. There is more structure to our job roles... we have a lot of team meetings and we discuss as a team how we can tackle things.'

Staff receive effective supervision and support, which promotes good-quality care. They

are enabled and encouraged to develop their competence through relevant training. The majority of staff are not yet suitably qualified but the provider has a clear expectation that staff engage in the diploma level 3 qualification following successful completion of their induction and probationary period. Newly appointed staff, who are not yet qualified, have an appropriate level of relevant experience that makes them suitable for their role. The manager regularly monitors their progress, which ensures continuous development of their knowledge and skills. This shows that the provider is committed to having a suitably qualified workforce.

Monitoring of the operation of the home and children's progress has improved. The manager regularly seeks the children's views and those of other stakeholders, and takes them into account in reviewing and developing the service. Equally, the quality of reports following independent monthly visits to the home has improved. The monitoring reports are informative and evaluative, and they provide a good and reliable overview of the home and how well it is safeguarding and promoting children's welfare.

Staff and children report that they are listened to 'all the time', and that they are comfortable in putting forward their views and raising concerns. The independent visitor to the home consults with children, staff, parents and social workers, and ensures that their views are represented in provider reports. Consequently, the provider maintains a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and supports the manager in its continuous improvement.

Good partnership working is a key strength, which enhances children's outcomes. The home advocates for children very well and ensures, as far as possible, that children receive the services they need and are entitled to. When there are shortfalls in the service provided by other professionals, the manager addresses this with partner agencies and takes action to supplement any shortfalls, thereby ensuring, as far as possible, that children are supported as well as possible while waiting for services from partner agencies.

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 differences 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 whom 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: SC381339

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Social Care Services (Clayton) Limited

Registered provider address: Social Care Services Group, 31 Shaw Road, Stockport SK4 4AG

Responsible individual: Stephen Davitt

Registered manager: Rebecca Doherty

Inspector

Sharon Lloyd, social care inspector

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