

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	08/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC381339
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Social Care Services (Clayton) Limited
Registered provider address	31 Shaw Road, Stockport, Cheshire SK4 4AG

Responsible individual	Stephen Davitt
Registered manager	Samantha Prescott
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd and Nicola Thomas

Inspection date	08/11/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC381339

Summary of findings

The children's home's provision is good because:

- The home is well led by an experienced and competent manager who works effectively with partner agencies. Leaders and managers have good oversight of the operation of the home and children's progress.
- Children make good all-round progress and re-engage with their education. Their physical and mental health needs are well promoted. They enjoy new experiences and benefit from opportunities to have fun and develop new skills.
- Children become safer through living in this home. They significantly reduce their dangerous, risk-taking behaviour. The home works well with other agencies and together they protect children at risk of sexual exploitation. Over time, the risks to children's safety and welfare reduce.
- When children's dangerous behaviour is a risk to themselves and others, the manager requests a review of the placement, for the benefit of all. In some circumstances, children's transitions to new placements are hurried and children are not able to visit their new homes and move from the home in a well-planned and positive way.
- Although the home's safeguarding procedures are strong, individual risk assessments are not always sufficiently robust to ensure appropriate protective action that addresses children's health and safety needs.
- Recruitment checks do not always provide compelling evidence of a candidate's suitability.
- There is clear evidence that the use of restraint with individual children reduces over time. However the records lack depth and do not demonstrate that staff do enough to intervene early and avert the need for restraint.
- The underfloor heating needs attention, as children's bedrooms are either too hot or too cold. The premises are institutional in nature and are in need of refurbishment. In addition, the footpath is littered with the staff's cigarette butts, which reduces the visual appeal of the home.

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
The registered person must notify Ofsted of any revisions to the statement of purpose and send Ofsted a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(b))	15/01/2017
The independent person must produce a report about a visit ('the independent person's report') which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether: (a) children are effectively safeguarded; and (b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (4)(a)(b))	15/01/2017
(2) In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating: (b) the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it. (4) The registered person must: (a) supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and (b) make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home. (5) The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (2)(b)(4)(a)(b)(5))	15/01/2017

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the

arrangements in place to protect their health and safety. In particular, ensure that risks relating to the way children interact with animals are assessed, and that for children with asthma, risks associated with the use of an inhaler are assessed and shared with school. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

- Ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair and, in particular, that staff manage children's behaviour in a way that promotes positive behaviour and reduces the need for restraint. To ensure effective scrutiny of incidents, improve the quality of written records. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)
- Ensure that any use of restraint is suitable for the needs of the individual child. The context in which restraint is used should recognise that, as a result of past experiences, children will have a unique understanding of their circumstances which will affect their responses to restraint by adults responsible for their care. In particular, ensure that children's size and health are taken into account in the type of restraint administered and review the use of prone restraint. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 48, paragraph 9.54)
- Ensure that, working with other relevant persons, staff actively seek to make the fullest contribution to the pathway planning process for those children preparing to leave the home. In particular, provide children who are moving from the home with appropriate emotional and physical support to reduce their anxieties about moving. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.28)
- Ensure, as far as possible that the home provides a homely, domestic and welcoming environment and that the home complies with health and safety legislation and the policies of the home. In particular, ensure that staff do not smoke on the premises, that children's bedrooms are appropriately heated and that communal areas are comfortable and homely. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- Ensure that the registered person maintains good employment practice. In particular, ensure that the recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a private provider in partnership with the local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to six children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/11/2015	Full	Good
05/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
11/06/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The home provides good individualised care, which is well informed by placement plans and risk assessments based on the local authority's care plans for each child. Most children enjoy stable, settled placements, and make steady progress across all areas of their development. They benefit from good quality, nurturing care from a dedicated and hardworking staff team which provides appropriate routines and structure. A child explained: 'Staff are nice. They listen to you and help sort out your worries. You can talk to them.' The day-to-day care provided to children is good and staff work hard to maintain positive activity levels for the group. Children build strong bonds with the staff team and enjoy spending time with carers who encourage them to develop their interests and skills and to have fun. Staff participate alongside children in a variety of activities, including skateboarding, baking and playing games. With staff encouragement, children develop skills that prepare them for future independent living. Staff talk to children as individuals about matters that are important to them. Incidents are always explored and staff repeatedly remind children about how to stay safe. Children learn to trust the adults caring for them and to confide in them or report any concerns they have. Children's views and complaints are taken seriously and action is taken to address them, wherever possible. The manager responds to complaints swiftly and in writing. Children have been satisfied with the outcome, even when their complaints (such as complaints about a member of staff's behaviour) have not been upheld. The home works closely with the looked after children nurse who visits fortnightly and helps to ensure children's physical and mental health needs are addressed. Children's emotional well-being is prioritised and the home refers them to the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) when required. A CAMHS professional attends staff team meetings and provides advice and guidance to staff, which helps them to understand the reasons for and how to respond to children's complex and challenging behaviour. This helps staff to develop the skills they need to support children's emotional and psychological well-being effectively. A CAMHS professional explained: 'They have listened to what we have said and her self-harm has reduced. They are thoughtful and work well with us.' Consequently, many children reduce their anxieties, are able to learn, and develop more socially acceptable behaviour. They develop self-esteem and higher aspirations aided by the appropriate use of incentives, positive rewards and praise for small achievements.	

Staff encourage children to engage in education that meets their needs. They work effectively with education providers to support children's learning, taking them to and from school or enabling tuition within the home. A headteacher commented: 'We are always delighted if a child goes there. Staff are flexible and open to whatever needs to happen. They are consistent and they go above and beyond what is expected. Children are as happy as they possibly could be.' Children who have missed extensive schooling before moving to the home re-engage with education, have excellent attendance and enjoy learning. The home provides children who are temporarily not in education with appropriate activities that promote their learning and development. For example, during the inspection children enjoyed a trip to the museum, reviewing and updating the children's guide and practising mathematics.

Professionals speak highly of the care provided to children. For example, a social worker explained: 'They are good at what they do. They attend to her health needs and support her mental health. They take her to CAMHS appointments and her self-harm has reduced. They are good at risk management and her health and education have been well supported.'

Many children who move to the home do so at a time of crisis in their lives and, in most cases, the home is charged with helping bring stability into their lives so that they can return to their family, foster family or move on to independence, having established good routines and reduced dangerous behaviour. Transitions to the home are usually well planned, with children having the opportunity to visit the home before moving in. The manager carries out detailed impact risk assessments and takes the needs of children already in placement into account when assessing referrals. This helps to reduce the likelihood of children who are very vulnerable being adversely influenced by others who have not yet established good and safe patterns of behaviour.

When children display behaviour that is having a negative impact on others and, despite staff interventions, continue to put the health and safety of other children and staff at risk, the manager requests a placement review and in some cases, serves notice on the placement. One young person has recently left the home in this way and another had a disrupted placement following a serious incident. Two other young people have also moved on at very short notice. In at least three cases, children have not had the opportunity to find out about or visit their new placements before the move. This does not help to reduce their fears and anxieties when facing major changes in their lives. The home has not been sufficiently proactive to ensure that children are supported as well as possible during this anxious time.

The home is heated by underfloor heating, which the manager explained is difficult to regulate. Consequently, children's bedrooms are often cold. This was addressed with the manager during the inspection and she took immediate action to rectify

the problem, arranging for individual thermostats to be set up for controlling the temperature in children's bedrooms.

The home is suitably located in a residential area not far from the city centre. A location assessment identifies key features of the locality and show that it has good transport links and acceptable levels of crime. It is purpose-built to accommodate six children and is institutional in style. It is subject to repeated damage and is in need of renovation. The provider recognises this and has begun to refurbish the home. Equipment and furnishings were damaged during a recent spate of destructive behaviour by children who have now left. One child explained: 'I've been complaining about the painting. And we need more furniture. There was an incident the other day and it got damaged. I understand why but they need to brighten up the place. It's not fair on the rest of us.'

Staff encourage children to personalise their bedrooms with photographs and personal possessions. They help children to choose bedding and soft furnishings that they like so they feel comfortable and relaxed in their own rooms. Staff encourage and assist children to keep their bedrooms clean and tidy but some of the furnishings in children's bedrooms have been damaged by aggressive behaviour and are in need of repair or replacement.

Although the home has a policy of no smoking on the premises, some staff smoke outside in the garden and leave cigarette butts as debris on the ground. This is not a good example for children and reduces the visual appeal of the home.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Good safeguarding procedures are a key strength of the home. Children who have been frequently missing and are at very high risk of child sexual exploitation have significantly reduced their dangerous behaviour and are very well protected by the home. Staff keep in touch with children who are out in the community, follow them when they have concerns, search for those who go missing and bring them back to the home, often in the early hours of the morning. The on-call manager attends the home and goes out with a member of staff to search for children when they are missing at night. A social worker explained: 'The outcomes have been very positive. She was at very high risk of child sexual exploitation when she arrived. She had been missing very often. They were really good at going after her over a period of four to five weeks until in the end she stopped going missing. They made their expectations clear.'	

Staff work in close partnership with the police and the local safeguarding team and this serves to keep children safe. The police community support officer for the home said: 'These staff go above and beyond what we expect. For example, they follow the kids when they go missing, they don't just ring us. They go looking for them in known child sexual exploitation hotspots and they bring them back. I feel privileged to have this home on my patch. When children come here, they reduce the number of missing incidents significantly. It reduces the burden on the police force. They rarely press charges for criminal damage but we work together to nip things in the bud.'

The manager meets regularly with safeguarding professionals and the managers of other children's homes, so she has a good overview of the safety concerns in the area. She requests strategy meetings or professional discussion as necessary to ensure that risks to children's safety are shared and a multi-agency approach is implemented. For example, through swift and effective collaborative working, a child at risk from grooming was protected and an arrest has been made. The child has seen that staff have listened to him and taken action to keep him safe as soon as he confided in them. This gives him confidence and helps him to trust the staff team to keep him safe.

A safeguarding professional said: 'I've worked with them on a number of high risk cases. They've done very good work. They've provided number plates and they listen for names and share information. The staff are very committed and are really good at working with child sexual exploitation. This is definitely one of the good homes. They've turned children round and got them ready for foster care.' Children who arrive at the home at high risk of sexual exploitation are deemed to be at low risk when they move on. Equally, children who self-harm are very well supported in the home and reduce this behaviour over time.

Children report that they feel safe in the home. One said: 'The best thing is: they make you feel more safe and they look after you.' Children are able to explain how staff keep them safe from bullying and a record of bullying incidents demonstrates that staff intervene appropriately and address incidents of bullying. When children attempt to harm themselves or others with weapons, staff intervene to remove the weapon and keep them safe. Staff seek medical advice appropriately when children's mental and physical safety is at risk.

Individual written risk assessments identify children's particular risk-taking behaviour and guide staff in how to respond to incidents. These are variable in quality. While staff do manage risks well, not all risks are identified and explored and clear guidance in risk management is therefore not always provided to staff. For example, the risks to an asthmatic child of not taking his rescue medication with him to school or on outings have not been considered. This does not ensure that his health is fully protected. The risk of injury to staff as a result of a child's challenging behaviour have not been identified and no guidance is provided about recognising triggers and intervening early to avoid and defuse conflict.

Consequently, there are a high number of injuries to staff and they do not have the best possible guidance on how to avoid being assaulted and the subsequent need for restraint. Risk assessments advocate the use of prone restraint with small children, including those with asthma. This is not acceptable practice.

While it is evident that restraint is used only to prevent serious harm, records of incidents are brief and the precursor to the event is not always plain to see. It is therefore difficult to assess how well staff manage situations prior to a serious incident. This impedes the effective monitoring of incidents.

Good staff recruitment processes are undermined because the home does not always follow up on information or concerns from references. This does not ensure that the home has fully assessed applicants or that all staff employed at the home are suitable to work with children.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
A qualified and experienced registered manager provides strong and effective leadership. She is very well respected by staff and partner agencies. Good monitoring of children's experiences and progress ensures that children's individual needs are prioritised and that children have improved outcomes. Children are looked after by a staff team that is well supported and supervised. Staff are happy in their work, enthusiastic and committed to providing children with the best possible service. For example, one explained: 'I enjoy it 100%. It's a very supportive environment. We always try our best.' Another said: 'The managers have been brilliant with me. I'm open with them and they are open with me.' Effective collaborative working with partner agencies ensures that children benefit from a multi-agency approach that identifies and addresses their individual needs. Staff meetings and one-to-one supervision sessions are child-focused and help staff to reflect on their practice and improve their understanding of children's individual needs. Input from a CAMHS specialist helps the home to develop good strategies for developing influential relationships with children and managing children's behaviour effectively. Staff receive training that supports them to promote good outcomes through a variety of mediums, including online training, face-to-face training and discussion groups. Partnership working is strong. The home works extremely well with a range of professionals and this ensures that children receive the support they need. When	

other professionals do not provide the input and services a child needs, the home advocates on behalf of the child, challenging them to meet their responsibilities to the child.

The home meets its aims and objectives as set out in the child-focused statement of purpose. It mostly provides short- to medium-term care that helps children to become increasingly safe, to re-establish engagement with education and to stabilise their behaviour so that, in most cases, they successfully move on to independence, home or permanent placements. A few children have been discharged swiftly, when their behaviour has deteriorated after a long period of stability and this behaviour has begun to have a negative impact on other children.

Although the home reviews the statement of purpose periodically, it does not routinely submit the reviewed document to Ofsted, nor does it notify Ofsted of changes to the statement of purpose. The document does not fully reflect the home and contains information that relates to other homes run by the same provider. It refers to statutory guidance that is now out of date. This does not have an impact on the quality of care given to children.

The manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. She regularly reviews the operation of the home and takes account of independent visitor reports to drive improvement in the quality of care. She produces a review report every four months, which includes an assessment of children's progress. While this report is shared with senior managers, there is a delay in submitting it to Ofsted and this hinders Ofsted from assessing how well the manager assesses the quality of the service. The report does not show clearly how children's and stakeholder's views contribute to the development of the home.

The independent visitor reports on serious incidents that have occurred each month but does not give a view about how well the home protects children and promotes their welfare.

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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