

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	14/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC381339
Type of inspection	Interim
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

Inspection date	13/02/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judges that it has declined in effectiveness. Children's overall experiences and progress since the last inspection have been limited or poor. Two children were admitted shortly after the last inspection. The negative impact of one child on other children has been significant and children who had previously made good progress were drawn into dangerous and criminal behaviour. The home could not keep them or others safe from harm. This has resulted in two children having unplanned endings to their placements. Two other children have displayed challenging and harmful behaviour that has placed both themselves and others at risk of serious harm. A child has temporarily moved out of the home for their own safety. This was necessary because the home was unable to prevent one child from negatively influencing and thereby endangering the health and safety of the other child. One child has continued to make steady progress at the home and another, who was recently admitted, appears to be settling in well. Both children report that they like the home and staff, but one said that other children 'do my head in', and the other said that there are times when she just needs to get away from the home. Both children report that it can be very stressful living at this home. Engagement with education is variable. For example, one child attended school regularly until recently and now refuses to attend. Another child is fully engaged in school, and attends part time, in accordance with their relevant plan. A child who has lived at the home for three weeks does not attend education, but as yet no arrangements for his education have been made. The child has been out of school for a long time. He is currently waiting for the local authority to make suitable arrangements for his education. In the meantime, staff encourage him to complete worksheets that they source from the internet. Although staff are making efforts to engage him in education, the current arrangements are not preparing him well for the future. The manager initiates placement reviews for children whose needs the home is not meeting. She has served notice on a child's placement because the child is not making progress. Even though the notice period has ended, the child has remained	

at the home because the local authority has struggled to source a suitable alternative placement. Plans are now in place for a well-planned introduction to a new home. However, the child is clearly expressing her wish to leave this home immediately. The manager is working with the placing authority and the new provider to ensure that the transition is smooth and successful, while taking account of the child's wishes and feelings.

There has been a high level of challenging and antisocial behaviour at the home. There have been many serious incidents involving four of the children. The home's behaviour management strategies have not been effective and attempts by staff to help children reduce their challenging and criminal behaviour have been unsuccessful. Consequently, children's experiences of living in the home have been negative and their safety and welfare have been compromised. For example, some children have been kept awake through much of the night on numerous occasions; this has made them tired at school the next day. Children have been at risk through substance and alcohol misuse, sexual assault and self-injurious behaviour. Several staff members have been assaulted.

Children have been missing from home or absent without authority on numerous occasions, and some have been the perpetrators or victims of harm in the community. No children have been restrained during this time, but the police have been appropriately called on to support staff when children's behaviour in the home has been unsafe or they have gone missing.

The manager described the weeks leading up to Christmas 2016 as 'chaotic'. Just before the Christmas holiday, three members of staff, including the assistant manager, left after giving short notice or no notice at all. This caused distress to some of the children and to one in particular, who had built up trusting relationships with two of the staff who left. She keenly felt the rejection from these staff, who did not tell her that they were leaving and have not maintained any form of contact; this has resulted in the return of dangerous behaviour that had previously reduced. The provider has made sure that the remaining staff understand the importance of giving notice before leaving, particularly in relation to children's emotional well-being and stability.

For the most part, children are looked after by comparatively inexperienced staff whose understanding and expertise is still developing. Only four of the current staff have worked at the home for more than a year and seven joined between July 2016 and January 2017. Of the new starters, only one is suitably qualified. This means that less than half of the staff team is appropriately qualified in working with children and young people. A temporary assistant manager has been working at the home since January 2017. She is experienced and competent. The registered manager and the staff team appreciate the support that she gives and the way in which she leads through example. The provider recognises the need to strengthen the staff team with suitably qualified and experienced staff. He is actively recruiting permanent senior staff.

The three requirements that were made following the last inspection have not been met. Although the statement of purpose has been updated twice since the last inspection, the home has not informed Ofsted of the changes. This prevents Ofsted, as regulator, from maintaining a good overview of changes to the provision. The six-monthly monitoring report that was due at the end of December 2016 has not yet been completed. The manager is therefore unable to demonstrate how she has assessed the quality of care and children's progress during the period between July 2016 and December 2016. The independent visitor's reports do not routinely show the visitor's opinion as to whether the home is effectively safeguarding children and whether the conduct of the home promotes children's welfare.

Of the six recommendations that were made following the last inspection, only two have been fully met. New staff have been through robust recruitment procedures, which help to reduce the risk of children being cared for by unsafe people. The use of restraint has been reviewed and the home is no longer using prone restraint with children. Indeed, each child has their own physical intervention protocol that takes into account their size and health. No children have been restrained.

The quality of children's individual risk assessments has not yet improved. Not all risks are identified and explored in the plan and clear guidance in risk management is therefore not always provided to staff. The last inspection highlighted that the risks to an asthmatic child had not been assessed. That child has now left, but another child with asthma lives at the home. The manager reports that the child's inhalers are kept in the office for safety reasons. The written risk assessment does not assess the risks for the child of not having access to this medicine when she is absent without permission or missing from home. Nor does the risk assessment outline when it is necessary to remove furniture and possessions from the same child's bedroom, although staff say that this is to prevent self-harm. This makes it difficult for the manager to demonstrate that the home's safeguarding practice is proportionate and necessary and that risks to a child's health and safety have been fully considered and mitigated.

The two children who have left the home since the last inspection have done so without notice, following serious incidents. This means that the home has not yet been able to demonstrate that it provides good emotional and physical support to children who are moving to a new home.

The manager acknowledges that the quality of records needs further improvement. Progress with regard to this recommendation has been slow because the home has been focusing on crisis management since the last inspection.

A recommendation to improve the quality of the environment has not been met and the overall standard of decor has deteriorated to the point that it is now poor. There has been significant damage to the home. Furnishings are broken, paintwork is dirty and the lounge has a strong and unpleasant odour. Communal rooms lack soft furnishings and ornaments and give the impression of being uncared for. Both

of the children's showers are out of use due to damage, and a toilet seat in one of the children's bathrooms is loose. No towels are available for hand-drying in the bathrooms. In the children's bathrooms there is an unpleasant odour, which emanates from the drains in the centre of each room. In the back garden, the area outside the patio doors is littered with cigarette butts and there is a leaking overflow pipe that causes a wet patch on the footpath and is therefore a potential hazard. This means that children live in a home that is uncared for, unhomely, unwelcoming and, to some extent, dirty.

The registered manager reports that she has admitted children even though she felt the home could not meet their needs. Furthermore, in one case she was concerned that the children already in placement would have a negative influence on a child, which indeed they did. She recognises that she needs to be more assertive and needs to carry out more rigorous impact risk assessments so that she only admits children whose needs the home can reasonably expect to meet.

The provider has met with the local authority to review the terms of the contract. The responsible individual has temporarily reduced the number of places that are available at the home from six to four, due to the highly complex needs and vulnerabilities of children who are being referred. He is taking action to promote some stability and consistency for those children who are already living at the home. Partnership working with other agencies is mostly good. For example, the home works collaboratively with health services and the police; this promotes children's physical, mental and emotional health and safety.

Staff report that they have pulled together throughout this difficult period by working overtime and supporting each other so that they now constitute a much stronger team. They say that they are more confident in their work. The manager reports that staff provide care that is more consistent and demonstrate a strong commitment to the children. Staff say they are well supported by the manager, the organisation and each other.

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
08/11/2016	Full	Good
24/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/11/2015	Full	Good
05/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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) meet(s) 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
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))	15/03/2017
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))	15/03/2017
(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)) In particular, use the monitoring report to understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child, and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home.	15/03/2017
10: The health and well-being standard	15/03/2017

10. (1) The health and well-being standard is that— (a) the health and well-being needs of children are met; (b) children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and (c) children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (a) ensure that staff help each child to— (i) achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child’s relevant plans; (ii) understand the child’s health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child’s health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child’s age and understanding; and (iv) understand and develop skills to promote the child’s well-being; (c) ensure that each child has access to such dental, medical, nursing, psychiatric and psychological advice, treatment and other services as the child may require. In particular, ensure that any risks to an asthmatic child’s health are carefully assessed. Ensure also that storage arrangements for rescue medication, which limit the child’s access to medicines such as inhalers, are based on advice from medical practitioners and do not compromise the health of a child who is missing from home or absent from home.	
12: The protection of children standard 12. (1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (b) that the home’s day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; (d) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health. In particular, carry out repairs to the bathroom and shower room, the drainage system and water systems, and renovate the lounge and other communal areas. 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 addition, remove the cigarette butts	31/03/2017

that litter the garden and provide towels so that children can wash and dry their hands after using the toilet.	
13: The leadership and management standard 13. (1) The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. In particular, when recruiting new staff, pay attention to the levels of experience and competence of those staff already in post; and ensure that the overall competence of the staff team is appropriate to meet the needs of the children and the statement of purpose.	15/03/2017
14: The care planning standard 14. (1) The care planning standard is that children— (a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and (b) have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; (b) that arrangements are in place to— (i) ensure the effective induction of each child into the home; (ii) manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and (iii) plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority. In particular, make informed decisions when admitting new	15/03/2017

children to the home, taking account of the needs of the children already in placement and the impact of those children on the child who is being referred, so that only children whose needs the home can reasonably expect to meet are admitted. Ensure that transitions to and from the home are well managed and meet children's individual needs.	
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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 that are in place to protect them. When there are safeguarding concerns regarding a child, their placement plan, which will have been agreed between the home and the placing authority, must include details of the steps that the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. In particular, only remove items of furniture and personal possessions from a child's bedroom when the child's individual risk assessment identifies that this is necessary in order to keep the child safe and well. ('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 in order 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. Ensure that the scrutiny of incidents is effective by improving the quality of written records. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 that 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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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