

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	20/05/2015
Unique reference number	SC386837
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	New Horizons (Stockport) Ltd
Registered person address	New Horizons (Stockport) Ltd, 5 Bramhall Park Road, Bramhall, STOCKPORT, Cheshire, SK7 3DQ

Responsible individual	Miss Bharati Parikh
Registered manager	Miss Amie Evans
Inspector	Ms Ruth Loughridge

Inspection date	20/05/2015
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	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	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC386837

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- Leadership and management is inadequate. The Registered Manager has not maintained a suitable presence within the home. There has been a lack of effective management oversight and leadership for staff, in particular during turbulent and challenging times.
- Staff have not received appropriate support, guidance or responses from the senior leadership team. Managers have not been decisive in their actions and have relied heavily on a core group of staff to maintain and promote the safety and welfare of young people.
- Training opportunities and formal supervision for staff have been extremely limited.
- Systems for monitoring and reviewing the operation of the home lack rigour and do not recognise and sufficiently address shortfalls.
- Staffing arrangements have not promoted continuity of care and are not in line with the homes Statement of Purpose. This document is misleading and does not accurately reflect management or staffing arrangements for this home.
- Requirements from the previous inspection have not been sufficiently addressed. Serious incidents are still not always notified to Ofsted. This limits Ofsted's ability to regulate the home.
- Leaders and managers do not consistently challenge partner agencies. For example, when independent return home interviews are not completed, or alternative placements for young people have not been sourced quickly enough when required. This resulted in a period of unsettled and challenging behaviour which has hampered young people's progress and development.

The children's home strengths

- A strong and experienced deputy manager has provided support and guidance for staff in the absence of the manager.
- Young people benefit from care provided by a core staff team who have persevered and demonstrated a genuine commitment to keeping young people safe and meeting their needs.
- The arrangements for keeping young people safe are good. Care practice is underpinned by well thought out risk management strategies that are designed to effectively manage young people's risk taking behaviour. This includes robust responses to concerns around missing from care and child sexual exploitation.
- The home has positive links with a number of external care, health and safeguarding agencies and professionals. These links are utilised to ensure a collaborative response is made to meeting young people's needs.
- Staff maintain good communication with placing authorities and feedback from them is positive. Young people are fully involved in making decisions about their lives including setting behaviour management goals and preparing their individual care plans.
- Young people are well supported in keeping in touch with their family and other important people. Young people and carers recognise this as a major strength.

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
16: Statement of purpose; ensure that the statement of purpose is kept under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify Ofsted of any revisions and send Ofsted a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. This is with specific reference to ensuring the statement provides accurate details of the management and staffing structure of the home (Regulation 16(3)(a)(b))	06/07/2015
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met; the registered person must, and must ensure that staff challenge the placing authority to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. This is with particular reference to missing from home interviews, and the need to challenge children's plans (Regulation 5 (c))	06/07/2015
13: The leadership and management standard; the registered person is required 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. This is with particular reference to suitable responses to concerns raised by the staff team relating to staffing and on-call arrangements (Regulation 13 (2) (f))	06/07/2015
11: The positive relationships standard; ensure that staff are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses (Regulation 11(2) (a) (x))	06/07/2015
13: The leadership and management standard; ensure the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that helps children aspire to fulfil their potential and promotes their welfare. In particular, lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers outcomes, set out in the home's	06/07/2015

statement of purpose ensuring that there are a sufficient number of staff who work as a team to provide continuity of care for each child living at the home (Regulation 13 1(a)(b) and (2)(a)(b)(d)(e))	
40: Notification of a serious event; the registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation: an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b))	06/07/2015

Recommendations

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

- those with a leadership and/or management role should be visible and accessible to staff and able to deliver their leadership and/or management responsibilities. Any registered manager employed in the home should have sufficient capacity to ensure that the Quality Standards are met for each child in the home (The Guide, page 52, paragraph 10.7)
- ensure any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. (The Guide, page 65, paragraph 15.5)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This service is one of three homes owned and managed by a private company. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for two children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or learning difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/02/2015	SC - Interim	sustained effectiveness
25/06/2014	SC - Full	good
13/03/2014	SC - Interim	good progress
17/10/2013	SC – Full	good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	requires improvement
Social workers, independent reviewing officers and relatives commented positively on the care provided at this home. However, it is acknowledged that the absence of strong leadership has impacted on the progress young people have made since the last inspection. This is because decisive and effective action was not taken in relation to the placement of a young person who was clear that he no longer wanted to remain at the home. Managers were not proactive in ensuring the placing authority identified a placement within the timescales given, when notice on the placement was served. This delay in moving the young person, who had previously progressed well in this home, led to what was a period of very disruptive behaviour that directly impacted on the care and progress of other young people. Young people enjoy positive relationships with the very small core staff team. This small team are highly committed to their roles. The aforementioned period of disruption created a necessity to use an excessive number of relief and agency staff. Consequently, there an overreliance upon the skills of an insufficient number of core staff which resulted in a lack of engagement from young people. This resulted in a responsive rather than planned approach to young people's care during this period. One young person commented how he had found it difficult to cope with all the different faces and that most of them did not know how deal with the young people in the home. Outside of this challenging period, young people are noted to have made some progress since being at the home. Staff make every effort to engage young people in planning their care and on the whole listen and respond to their views. Individual placement plans are largely based upon goals which young people set for themselves. One young person commented, 'I do my own placement plan with staff, it is good because I can see my progress and the staff tell me I am doing well. I am more settled now and like living here because things have calmed down.' Where appropriate the home works well with families and placing authorities to establish and promote contact for young people. Staff place a great deal of importance in ensuring vital relationships with important people are nurtured. This has contributed to young people having new opportunities to explore and build upon their sense of family identity and to be involved in family life events, such as christenings. One young person stated, 'Staff take me to my nana's. They speak to her and make sure I'm alright. I have a lot of family near and have had two	

overnights since being here. I had none before.'

There has been a notable lack of education engagement during the unsettled period. However, improvements in this area are noted and young people are beginning to engage with their tutor, who provides educational support within the home. Staff work closely with young people and their tutor to ensure barriers to educational participation are overcome. As a result, small steps are being made with young people who historically have chosen not to attend school.

Young people are supported to access community facilities and they engage in healthy, active pursuits such as football. Staff work creatively with young people to promote their understanding of healthy eating and to encourage this at all times. When necessary, therapeutic support is provided. Young people are noted to be engaging well in this service and are beginning to develop an insight into their own experiences and behaviour.

Education attendance, activities in the home and community and family contact, form the basis of regular routines for young people. Combined with guidance and support toward physical and emotional wellbeing, young people are beginning to make progress across many aspects of their lives. This is recognised as good progress for some young people at this home. One carer said, 'He seems a lot more confident. The staff have all been very good with him and he has done brilliantly. The staff are brilliant. They always seem to know just what he needs and when he needs it. I have met various members of staff and we get on very well. Their aim is making sure he is ok and they are working towards that. He needs the right people around him and he has got this.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Young people say they feel safe and that staff are genuine in their efforts to keep them safe. No concerns were raised by relatives or professionals who say they are confident that young people are safe at this home, even when at their most challenging. The independent reviewing officer for one young person said, 'He is not deprived of his liberty but there is a robust safeguarding plan in place to protect his interests.' One relative commented, 'Oh he is completely safe. I would know if he didn't want to go back for some reason. He goes back no problem. They have gone out of their way for him and I think he appreciates that.' Young people benefit from being cared for by staff that have a good knowledge and experience of how to keep them safe. Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding, which ensures they know how to recognise and respond to any	

matters of concern. They have a good understanding of the young people's needs, vulnerabilities and risks and know young people well. They are able to recognise and respond to changing moods and patterns and take pre-emptive action to avoid escalation in negative and risk taking behaviour. It is recognised that at times behaviour management has not been effective and that a failure to robustly respond to the behaviour of one young person has impacted negatively on others. There are clear, agreed responses in place for when situations become unsafe and unmanageable by staff. This includes protocols for involving the police, which have had to be used on a small number of occasions. Feedback from the police is extremely positive. One officer said, 'The home only involves us when they really need to. We are a last resort. The staff that I have dealt with and seen there are brilliant and the kids get on with them brilliantly.'

The home is much more settled following the recent changes in occupancy. Young people are now responding positively to boundaries and say they are motivated to improve their behaviour. They are involved in setting their own targets and goals and their achievements are rewarded through the effective use of incentives and rewards. This includes taking responsibility for their home and being involved in the day to day running of the house. One young person commented, 'They encourage us in the kitchen, we get rewards if we clean our rooms and points for doing jobs. I get £10 week pocket money and £3 reward for washing pots and stuff. The rules are fair.'

Risk assessments are comprehensive and are regularly reviewed and updated. Staff work closely with placing authorities to ensure that risk factors are shared and considered when developing risk management strategies. This includes working with young people who go missing from care and those who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation. Good links are maintained with relevant safeguarding agencies including the police and specialist organisations who provide support and guidance for both staff and young people. This ensures young people's risk and vulnerabilities are known, and that a collaborative response is taken to managing their risk taking behaviours.

There have been a number of concerning incidents of missing from care since the last inspection. Well thought out responses have been taken by staff. All actions taken in response to such episodes are well documented and include staff searching for young people, keeping in touch by phone and meeting with them when their whereabouts are known. Strong working relationships with the police contribute to a coordinated response when young people are missing or absent. The local police missing person's coordinator commented, 'They are very good at working with us. They do a lot of looking for young people themselves. When (name) was on home visits they would send staff to go to addresses where he might be, not just leaving it all to us. They have a very good working relationship with us and keep me informed when new residents are admitted. This means we are aware of concerns and how best to respond. If there are any issues we can drop in and discuss them. They are always very welcoming.' Although good

practice was noted in this area, action has not been taken to ensure young people have opportunity to engage in independent return interviews when they have been missing from the home. This means young people do not have the opportunity to discuss and explore their reasons for going missing, which may be related to issues in the home, with a person independent to the home. It is incumbent on the home to ensure these processes are in place and challenge the local authority when their obligation to provide this service is not met. This has not happened and procedures are still unclear.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
The home has a Registered Manager who has been in post since 2009. She is suitably experienced and qualified for this post. The manager is also registered to another home which has opened since the last inspection. She is required to divide her time between the two homes to ensure she retains oversight of each service. This has become an untenable arrangement as the demands placed on her by the other home being unsettled have impacted on her ability to be present at this home. The home records confirm the manager was only in this home on one occasion during the month of April, a period when the behaviour of young people was extremely unsettled and challenging. Consequently, there was a lack of effective leadership and decision making which contributed to staff feeling unsupported and unguided. In the absence of the Registered Manager, the deputy manager has undertaken many managerial responsibilities, in addition to working a full shift pattern. This is contrary to her role as outlined in the statement of purpose, which states that she works on a supernumerary basis. This arrangement has been further compounded by the inadequate and ineffective arrangements for on-call, whereby staff are expected to undertake this duty, often between finishing and starting a shift. These concerns, as well as those associated with the lack of stability within the staff team and the limitations in meeting young people's needs, had been raised on a number of occasions with the Registered Manager and the responsible individual who failed to provide an appropriate response. It is only through the dedication and perseverance of core staff that young people's needs have been broadly met and their risks and behaviours managed without significant consequence. There has at times been an over reliance on the use of agency and relief staff. A small group of dedicated staff have worked effortlessly to minimise the impact of this arrangement on young people's care. Following a reduction in the number of young people the home has managed to establish the foundations on which to build stability. This is because the remaining staff are extremely dedicated and have a wealth of experience and skills to offer young people. However, there is an	

insufficient number of permanent staff allocated to this home should occupancy increase or the deputy manager return to their supernumerary role, as outlined in the home's Statement of Purpose.

The homes Statement of Purpose is misleading in its overall representation of the management and staffing arrangements in this home. For example, it does not make clear how the manager's time will be deployed over her two homes and does not clearly identify which staff are permanent to this home. The document lists a number of staff from other homes in the organisation but does not make clear how their services will be utilised in this house. This creates the false impression about the staffing resources that are dedicated to this setting and is potentially misleading to current, and potential, stakeholders who have placed, or are considering placing young people in this home.

Staff are not fully supported in their role. Staff confirm that they have raised matters and concerns with the Registered Manager and responsible individual and feel extremely unsupported in their response. Formal supervision has not been taking place and there has been no focus on enhancing staff skills, knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Staff are up to date with mandatory training such as safeguarding and the use of restraint. Managers have acknowledged that there is a need to be more proactive in ensuring staff have opportunity to develop their practice and some preliminary steps have been identified.

There is a lack of rigour to the homes quality assurance processes, in particular the level of scrutiny by the independent visitor, who visits the home monthly. Reports suggest that the views of staff are routinely gathered and considered as part of their assessment of how well the home safeguards and promotes the welfare of young people. However, the homes records confirm that on at least one occasion there was not sufficient time to gather these views, although the report notes that staff are positive. This is clearly not the case and is another example of an opportunity to address concerns and promote improvement being missed.

There is a process in place to ensure relevant parties are informed about the occurrence of serious incidents. However, this process is not always followed and there have been a number of times when Ofsted have not been appropriately informed, for example when the police have been called to the home. This was a requirement made at the previous inspection and limits effective oversight and monitoring by the regulator.

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 looked after children 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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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