

Children's home – Interim inspection

Inspection date	31/01/2017
Unique reference number	SC400355
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	Vacant post
Inspector	Ceri Evans

Inspection date	31/01/2017
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 last full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has declined in effectiveness. Since the last inspection, there have been significant shortfalls in the safeguarding of young people, which has had a detrimental impact on the young people's outcomes. The home has experienced a period of instability and crisis over recent months as young people have joined the home and experienced staff members have left. Consequently, young people's experiences of living in the home are mixed and progress is inconsistent. Inappropriate matching and transition arrangements for young people have had a detrimental effect on most young people's placements. The current process for matching young people's needs is ineffective. There is limited evidence that the manager has appropriately considered the likely impact of new placements on the young person already resident in the home. The absence of a robust matching process prior to admission, and shortfalls in information have resulted in poor quality placements. This does not promote young people's safety and well-being. When young people engage in disruptive behaviour in the home, they demonstrate upset and anxiety by asking to be moved and by complaining about each other. Staff always follow up their immediate concerns and undertake targeted work to help them understand how to make a positive change. However, to date, this work has had little impact and patterns of disruption continue. This is not conducive to creating a nurturing environment where all young people are enabled to thrive and build a sense of belonging and warmth. Staff are alert to some risks and levels of supervision in the home are high. This means that when incidents do occur between residents, staff are on hand to intervene quickly, but not all risks are clearly identified and acted upon. For example, strategies to manage the self-harming behaviour of one young person were not adequately considered in the risk assessment. Overall, young people's individual risk assessments are poorly written and do not take account of the range of known and potential risks. Risk assessments fail to provide sufficient guidance to staff on how to manage young people's behaviour safely. In addition, they are not frequently updated to address emerging concerns. This has the potential to hinder the effectiveness of risk management strategies within the home. The manager	

recognises this shortfall and has identified how improvements can be made to the overall format. This will ensure that information is relevant, accessible and clear to all staff.

Missing-from-home episodes have increased in recent months. On at least three occasions, two young people have gone missing from the home together. The increase in missing-from-home episodes unquestionably exposes the young people to significant risk, including of child sexual exploitation. When young people do go missing from the home, staff respond promptly and are resourceful in seeking them out. They make a concerted effort to keep in contact and locate young people as quickly as possible. Good links are forged with other professionals to address missing-from-home concerns. Staff work in partnership with placing social workers, the police and child sexual exploitation services to ensure that young people's plans are implemented effectively. Furthermore, good arrangements are in place for missing-from-home return interviews. The manager ensures that these are undertaken by an independent person after every missing-from-home episode. This is a key opportunity to gather information and to help young people make safer choices in the future.

Staff are trained in behaviour management, including the use of physical restraint. There is an emphasis on de-escalation and staff use their learning to good effect. Physical restraint is only used as a last resort and when absolutely necessary for the protection of young people and staff. There have been only 10 restraints since the last full inspection. The majority of these have been low-level interventions and only lasted for a matter of seconds. Physical intervention records are maintained and reviewed by the manager. This ensures that interventions remain safe and effective.

Leaders and managers have failed to record incidents of concern appropriately. For example, details of serious incidents are not recorded with sufficient rigour. Records offer a limited overview of the incident and have no information about the action taken or subsequent outcome. Records made in this way do not stand up to scrutiny in the event of an investigation. Furthermore, this means that not all internal records are robustly monitored by the manager.

The education arrangements for young people are variable. Some young people have maintained good attendance. However, one young person does not have a current school placement. When educational progress is interrupted, there is some evidence of appropriate challenge and liaison with the virtual headteacher. However, the delay in sourcing a suitable school placement impacts considerably on the young person's well-being. Furthermore, the delay has come at a crucial point in their education. This has the potential to impact on future learning and employment prospects.

Achieving consistency in staffing has posed a significant challenge for the home. At times there has been the need to use staff from other homes within the organisation to cover shifts. Over time, this cannot fail to impact on young people's

sense of security and belonging. More positively, following a recruitment drive the home is now fully staffed. Staff vacancies have been filled and the manager ensures that sufficient staffing levels are maintained during periods of sickness, annual leave or when staff move to pursue other career choices. Shortfalls in the rota are acted upon quickly. This reduces the need for staff cover and provides a foundation for young people to develop stability.

The manager is new in post and is not yet registered with Ofsted. Staff spoken with during the inspection confirm that the manager is approachable and supportive. The staff team acknowledges that this has been a very difficult time but its members are committed to improving the service. Members of the staff team express dedication to their role and acknowledge the challenges of recent months. In discussion, it was apparent that staff understood the complexities and are committed to learning and moving on positively from these recent events.

Long-standing members of the team continue to receive refresher training in key areas, such as safeguarding and behaviour management. Newer staff members have also had the opportunity to attend core training events. However, the staff team would benefit from more specialised training with regard to specific issues relating to the young people in their care; for example, training on child sexual exploitation. This is something the manager has identified and is in the process of sourcing appropriate development opportunities.

Monitoring undertaken by the manager is not sufficiently robust. The manager has not completed a review of the quality of care every six months. This has a negative impact on the continuous development of the service. This also hinders the manager's ability to identify strengths and areas for development. This is not good practice and prevents the manager from analysing patterns and trends to help improve the experiences and progress for young people.

The home is generally clean, tidy and comfortable. However, parts of the home have undergone damage following disruptive behaviour. The manager is keen to address these issues and a programme of repair and redecoration has been requested. This repair work will ensure a more homely atmosphere and improve the overall presentation of the home.

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home that provides care and accommodation for up to three young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/08/2016	Full	Good
30/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/05/2015	Full	Good
10/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/10/2014	Full	Good

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, 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
8: The education standard In order to meet the education standard, the registered person must ensure: (1) that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (i) help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans. (vi) maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training to maximise the child's achievement.	10/03/2017
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered provider must ensure that: (2)(a)(i) 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. In particular, ensure that risk assessments are accurate, up to date and provide clear strategies to mitigate risks.	10/03/2017
12: The protection of children standard	10/03/2017

In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure: (2)(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 from harm effectively. This specifically relates to providing admission only to children whose needs have been carefully considered. The impact of these admissions on children living in the home must also be evaluated and carefully risk assessed.	
Complete a review of the quality of care provided to children ('a quality care review') at least every six months and supply a copy of this to HMCI within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care report is completed. (Regulation 45 (1)(4)(a))	10/03/2017

Recommendations

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

- Provide a homely environment. In particular, ensure that the home is well maintained and decorated. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The home's record of an incident or event must include a description of the action taken and the outcome of any resulting investigation. This specifically relates to maintaining detailed serious incident reports. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 63, paragraph 14.14)
- The registered person should ensure that the staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. This specifically relates to ensuring that all staff have the opportunity to attend updated child sexual exploitation training. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 53, paragraph 10.11)

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, 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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