

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	15/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC411030
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Meadows Care Limited
Registered provider address	Egerton House, Wardle Road, Rochdale OL12 9EN

Responsible individual	Niel Shelmerdine
Registered manager	Daniel Blackburn
Inspector	Ceri Evans

Inspection date	15/11/2016
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	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	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC411030

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- The home has recently experienced an unsettled period with one young person exhibiting challenging and often risky behaviour. For example, high levels of missing from home episodes, intimidating behaviour and physical aggression. Such behaviour impacted on their safety and well-being and exposed those young people living in the home to unacceptable levels of risk.
- Young people experience inconsistent support and care as staff turnover is high. This is because staff from other homes and agency staff frequently work in this home.
- The manager and staff team do not robustly manage all known risks. As a result, they have failed to demonstrate consistently good safeguarding practice to ensure that the safety and welfare of young people are maintained at all times.
- Behaviour management is not consistent. Staff and managers do not implement clear boundaries to help young people understand the consequences of their behaviour on themselves and others. Consequently, young people are not learning to modify their behaviour.
- Not all young people benefit from independent 'return' interviews each time they go missing from home. This represents a lost opportunity to understand young people's 'missing' behaviour to inform strategic planning.
- Allegation management is not robust. These have not always been investigated promptly in appropriate timescales with relevant agencies. The provider has also failed to notify Ofsted in line with regulation. This compromises external scrutiny of practice.

The children's home strengths

- Young people are generally positive about the quality of care and feel that staff are interested and concerned about their welfare. They have positive relationships with their key workers and feel able to express themselves in an assertive manner.
- Young people benefit from regular and positive contact with family members and those significant in their lives. They reported feeling happy with the level of contact.
- Staff are providing good opportunities in terms of activities and building self-esteem, they listen to the views of the young person and encourage positive choices.
- Parents and professionals report positively about the home and the care provided to young people. Good collaborative working relationships support young people's progress.
- The home environment is warm and friendly. It is decorated to a high standard and resembles a family 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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered provider must ensure that— (2)(a)(v) staff understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person.	29/12/2016
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered provider must ensure that— (2)(a)(vi) staff take effective action wherever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare.	29/12/2016
13: The leadership and management standard (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)(b) Ensure that staff work as a team. (e) Ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child.	29/12/2016
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is an allegation of abuse against the home or any person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(c)).	29/12/2016

Recommendations

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

- The missing from home return interview should be carried out within 72 hours of the child returning to their home or care setting. This should be an in-depth interview and is normally best carried out by an independent person (that is, someone not involved in caring for the child), who is trained to carry out these interviews and is able to follow-up any actions that emerge. (Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, page 14, paragraph 32)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is one of a number of children's homes operated by a private company. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The organisation also has a therapy department as well as a school which young people can access if appropriate.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/11/2015	Full	Good
12/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
23/10/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
This home requires improvement to be good. The period since the last inspection has been characterised by increased risk-taking behaviours from some young people and disengagement from staff. There have been a number of serious incidents which have had a detrimental impact on young people. Examples include intimidating behaviour, playing loud music, barricading friends in their bedrooms and leaving the home for periods of time during the night. For a period of time, this has had a negative effect on young people's day-to-day experiences of living in the home. There are inconsistencies within the staff team due to the regular use of agency workers and staff from other homes covering shifts. Efforts have been made to alleviate the impact of staffing shortfalls. However, over time this cannot fail to impact on young people's sense of security and belonging. More positively, young people benefit from good relationships with core staff who provide care that is genuine and centred around the young people's individual needs. The core staff team works hard to build relationships and young people say that they can approach staff at any time. Young people are generally positive about the quality of care and feel that staff are interested and concerned about their welfare. Young people feel able to express themselves and have confidence that their views are respected and acted upon. Young people's residential care plans, behaviour management plans and healthcare plans are detailed. The manager ensures that these are reviewed regularly to ensure that young people's current and emerging needs can be met. Young people routinely benefit from planned one-to-one sessions to address the aims of the placement, behaviours or areas for concern. Consequently, there is a clear structure to assist young people to make changes in their lives and to help them achieve their placement objectives. Young people attend school and most are making good progress. The promotion of education is a key strength of the home. Effective liaison with educational professionals has resulted in young people sustaining educational placements and achieving well. Staff understand the importance of education and supplement this with a variety of activities and discussion to promote informal education and learning activities. This includes reading and writing skills, along with independent living skills such as learning to cook, budget, manage money and developing interests to continue to their adult lives. All of which provide maximum opportunities for young people to develop and achieve. Staff support young people's contact with family and friends. Staff maintain close links with families and, when appropriate, ensure that they are involved in care	

planning decisions. Contact is promoted and maintained in a way that meets young people's best interests. As a result, young people's relationships with their family are nurtured and family ties are strengthened.

The staff provide a wide range of fun activities that are in line with young people's interests and talents. Young people are encouraged to think of others and contribute positively to the local and wider community. For example, supporting the local food bank. Young people also enjoy annual holidays as well as other activities such as swimming, visits to the skate park, bowling and day trips out. These experiences help to promote confidence and self-esteem as well as providing opportunities to try new things.

Young people enjoy regular family mealtimes and afternoon tea with staff. Staff sit with young people around the dining table and initiate discussions and plan activities with them. The environment is well presented, pleasantly decorated, clean and tidy. This promotes a sense of homeliness.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
This inspection highlights significant shortfalls in risk management. Consequently, young people have not been adequately safeguarded. The home has had an unsettled period, with one young person exhibiting challenging and often risky behaviour. Although some of the young people have clearly not engaged in risk-taking behaviour, there are still a number of shortfalls that are not acceptable. Staff supervision of the young people in the home has been poor. For example, on one occasion a peer group were able to enter the home and a bedroom of a young person, played loud music and were disruptive until the early hours of the morning. Staff were unable to enter the young person's room as it had been barricaded. Staff have failed to implement clear strategies to address this behaviour. This practice does not demonstrate robust safeguarding practice and places young people at risk of harm. Poor behaviour management compromises young people's progress, safety and welfare. Inconsistent boundaries and poor communication within the team mean that staff do not respond effectively to young people's behaviour. On occasions, staff have not responded to conflict appropriately and failed to use de-escalation strategies to good effect. As a result, young people are not being adequately supported to understand the consequences of their behaviour for themselves and the impact that this has on others. Consequently, young people do not learn to modify or improve their behaviour. Going missing from home has been a worrying feature in this home, with one young person going missing on almost a daily basis. However, since their departure, these missing from care episodes have now ceased. Records	

demonstrate that when young people are reported missing, staff implement the missing from care policy and protocols. This means that staff take prompt action to identify the whereabouts of young people. On their return, not all young people have had an independent return home interview. This signifies a missed opportunity to understand young people's missing from home behaviour to inform strategic planning.

Physical restraint is rare and only used when absolutely necessary. All staff are appropriately trained in the use of physical restraint and when it has been used, it has been appropriately managed. A record of each restraint is maintained. This contains the necessary information. This means that the manager maintains a full overview of the incident to ensure that it was carried out appropriately.

Allegation management is not sufficiently robust. Staff have not informed the designated officer regarding allegations about the home in a timely manner. For example, the provider notified the local authority safeguarding officer 10 days after the initial allegation was made. This further signifies poor safeguarding practice and prevents an independent person making a decision about how allegations should be managed and investigated.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The home is managed by a suitably experienced registered manager who has been in post since 2015. The registered manager is currently working towards his level 5 qualification for residential leadership and management. There are some weaknesses in the effectiveness of leadership and management that require improvement. The manager fully understands the strengths and weaknesses identified in this report and is committed to securing improvements. In the last two months, staffing levels have started to improve. That said, there is clear evidence that leaders and managers have not ensured that young people receive continuity of care. Since the last inspection, over 80 different people, aside from the core staff team, have worked in the home. This does not promote young people's welfare. Staff spoken with during the inspection say that managers are approachable and supportive. The manager demonstrates motivational qualities and ensures that staff are regularly supervised, trained and supported to fulfil their specific roles and responsibilities. The leader, managers and the team acknowledge that this has been a very difficult time but are committed to improving the service. The core staff team expresses dedication to its role and acknowledged 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.	

Leaders and managers acknowledge that this has been a difficult period and have identified ways to improve consistency in staff practice. This includes reflection in team meetings and ongoing training. Staff spoken with during the inspection confirm that their development needs are met through regular training. That said, there is still some way to go in evaluating the impact that this training has had on the day-to-day care practice in the home.

Regular monitoring of the home both externally and internally is sufficient. Monthly visits by an external visitor ensure that independent scrutiny of the quality of care is provided. The visitor consults with young people, staff and partner agencies to obtain their views. Any shortfalls identified as part of this process are routinely addressed to ensure that the home is operating appropriately and meeting young people's needs.

The manager deals with complaints promptly and sufficiently. When young people or external organisations have raised any areas of concerns, the manager has taken action to resolve matters and find quick solutions.

Serious incidents are not reported to Ofsted consistently in line with the Children's Homes Regulations 2015. As a result, those with an interest in young people's safety and welfare are not appropriately informed. This undermines the ability of the regulator to carry out its monitoring function effectively. Consequently, young people are not adequately safeguarded.

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 that 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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