

SC429995

Registered provider: A Significant Other Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a private organisation and is registered to care for and accommodate up to six children and/or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 16 to 17 May 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	Inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
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There are widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 5/01/2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is inadequate because

- The children and young people are not progressing educationally.
- There is a lack of clear understanding about the information contained in referral and placement documents received from the placing authority and the impact of this on the care to be provided.
- Impact risk assessments are not undertaken prior to or at the point of admission. These would enable the staff to look at behaviours and risks that might impact on the group of young people as individuals.
- Staff files do not demonstrate that there is a robust induction and probationary period in place. There is no evidence of any evaluation of staff's level of competence.
- The children and young people are at risk from each other and in the community due to ineffective behaviour management strategies.
- Not all of the staff have completed the necessary training courses in relation to physical intervention, even though records demonstrate that this practice is undertaken.
- Sanctions are used in the home but do not always following regulation and guidance in terms of the sanction used relative to the behaviour.
- The recruitment procedures are weak: in particular, the checking of references.

The children's home's strengths

- The home employs a core group of caring and committed staff.
- There are positive working relationships with partner agencies.
- The health needs of the children and young people are well met.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
26/04/2016	Full	Good
26/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
18/08/2015	Full	Good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; and use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— protect and promote each child's welfare; and help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect; and ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6(1) and (2)(b)(ii)(v)(c)(i))	23/06/2017
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment. (Regulation 8	23/06/2017

(1) and (2)(ix)) The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— develop the child’s interests and hobbies; participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child’s interests and preferences; and make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community; and that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child’s interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9(1) and (2))	08/06/2017
*The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child’s behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child’s age and	23/06/2017

understanding; help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful; strive to gain each child's respect and trust; understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; and that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11(1)(b)(c), (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(viii)(ix)(x)(xi)(xii)(xiii) and (b))	
*The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;	23/06/2017

manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and 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; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded; and 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. (Regulation 12(1) and (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(b)(c) and (d))	
The leadership and management standard is that 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, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; 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. (Regulation 13(1) and	23/06/2017

(2)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)) The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— 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. (Regulation 14(1) and (2)(a))	23/06/2017
No measure of control or discipline which is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (2) may be used in relation to any child. The following measures may not be used to discipline any child— any restriction, other than one imposed by a court or in accordance with regulation 22 (contact and access to communications), on— a child’s contact with parents, relatives or friends; visits to the child by the child’s parents, relatives or friends; a child’s communications with any persons listed in regulation. (Regulation 19(1) and (2)(c)(i)(ii)(iii))	23/06/2017
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children’s safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children’s home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).	23/06/2017

The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform. (Regulation 32(1)(2) and (3)(a)(b))	
The registered person must— ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction. The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(1) and (4)(a)(b))	23/06/2017
The registered person must notify, without delay, the local authority for the area in which the children's home is located of every admission of a child into the home and every discharge of a child from the home. (Regulation 41(1))	31/05/2017
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ('a quality of care review') at least once every six months. In order to complete a quality of care review, the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ('the quality of care review report'). (Regulation 45(1)(2)(b)(c) and (3))	23/06/2017
The registered provider must carry on the children's home in such manner as is likely to ensure that the home will be financially viable for the purpose of achieving the aims and objectives set out in the statement of purpose. The registered person must—	23/06/2017

ensure that adequate financial records are maintained and kept up to date in respect of the home; and supply a copy of the financial records and most recent accounts to HMCI at HMCI's request. (Regulation 47(1) and (2)(a)(b))	
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* These requirements are subject of a compliance notice.

Recommendations

1. The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce-related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should:
 - detail the necessary management and staffing structure, (including any staff commissioned to provide health and education), the experience and qualifications of staff currently working within the staffing structure and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the home's statement of purpose;
 - detail the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training (such as safeguarding, health and safety and mandatory qualifications);
 - detail the process for managing and improving poor performance;
 - detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice (see regulation 33(4)(b)) and keep appropriate records for staff in the home.

The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff, including the home's manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

2. Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. In particular, the home's daily log book should only contain minimal information and young people's initials while signposting where the detail of the entry is contained. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Failures in the admission process, matching and behaviour management of the young people has led to a lack of protection and safeguarding in the home. Five of the last six young people admitted have had their placements served notice due to a failure either to safeguard the young person or to manage their presenting behaviours.

There are four young people resident in the home. Since the last inspection, two young people joined the group and have since moved on to other placements. The moves from the home for these young people were not positive in that they were at the instigation of the home rather than part of a long-term plan. This impacts negatively on young people's experiences in the home and builds in additional moves in the looked after system. This impacts on the ability of young people to develop trust in the adults charged with caring for them.

Decision-making processes in relation to new admissions to the home are not recorded. Staff do not undertake effective impact assessments at the point of, or prior to, the admission of the young person. This makes it difficult to evaluate whether admissions are safe and appropriate. There is no evidence of evaluating the needs of the young person referred to the home against the stated aims of the placement. The result is that there are potential risks left unexplored, leaving young people vulnerable.

Education outcomes for young people are weak. One young person has a school placement but his attendance is poor. A professional involved with the young person said: 'His attendance is very erratic and they don't seem to be able to impact on this.' The other young people are educated via a tutor in the home, but none of these young people receives the required 25 hours of education a week.

The young people live in a large and spacious home environment and are able to choose their own bedroom and decorate it to their taste. However, the home is currently in a poor state of decoration with broken equipment, signs of food thrown around the home and in the grounds, furniture damaged and, in one room, exposed wires are hanging down, which pose a risk to young people. The young people's bedrooms show a lack of personalisation. All of this leads to young people feeling under-valued and prevents them from settling or engaging with the staff.

Young people do not speak positively about the home. One young person could not name anything good about the home. He presented as unenthusiastic while using language that lacked expression when referring to life at the home, stating: 'It's okay here, but I have only been here a few weeks and have been told I am moving again, but I don't know where to.' Another young person stated: 'There is lots of bullying.' The general atmosphere is of dissatisfaction, and a professional involved with young people stated: 'They don't seem to know how to use diversionary tactics. I think they do care and they are all nice people and welcoming. They work well with us, but there is a lot of inconsistency in practice.'

Key-working sessions take place to allow young people and staff opportunities to discuss specific topics. However, these are reactive in nature and do not always relate to the aims of the placement. In addition, records seen demonstrated that, on occasion, the sessions are punitive and judgemental in style rather than reflective and enabling. As a result, there has been limited impact on young people's behaviour and meeting their

identified goals.

Activities for young people are limited to walks in the local area or kicking a ball around with staff at the local park. There is evidence that staff members have challenged this at team meetings without success. The result is that the young people report feeling bored. A young person said: 'They never do anything with us as activities other than go for a walk.'

Staff members facilitate and, when appropriate, supervise contact arrangements between the young people, their family and those important to them. This helps the young people to maintain important family, cultural and community links.

Care plans incorporate most aspects of the young person's individual needs. These demonstrate that specific targets for engaging with the young people, promoting contact with family and engaging in suitable education provisions are being set. However, records are not always detailed enough to include all relevant needs and strategies to enable staff to meet these targets. The result is that young people do not have all their needs addressed by the placement.

Young people attend health appointments well and are supported by staff to attend these when needed.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

There is a high turnover of staff at the home, and vacancies still exist on the rota. This is likely to create uncertainty for the young people living in the home and impacts on how the young people build long-term positive relationships with adults in the home.

Recruitment checks are not thorough or robust. This means that staff are working at the home without adequate checks and references. This practice leaves the young people potentially at risk of being cared for by people who are unsuitable.

The practice of monitoring safeguarding concerns and related records at the home is ineffective. Serious incidents have taken place and have not been managed effectively, resulting in the police being called to address issues over an extended period. An officer stated: 'They seem to be going from one crisis to another and the staff can't cope.'

Risk assessments do not contain effective strategies to inform staff practice that would enable them to mitigate risk. When detailed strategies are in place, on some occasions they have not been followed by staff. For example, a young person at risk of sexual exploitation stated that she was meeting an unknown male and would return later. The actions taken by the member of staff were not effective in engaging this young person to remain at the home. This lack of training, insight and action increases the risk to young people.

Incidents of missing remain high. Staff are aware of the potential risks to the young people and follow them into the local area to try to ensure their safety. However, the poor relationships between the staff and the young people mean that such strategies alone are ineffective, and the police are notified.

The daily recordings and files relating to the young people show evidence that bullying

behaviour is taking place. Staff address such behaviour, but there is no central log maintained at the home that enables the staff to reflect on the incidents and develop strategies to prevent further occurrences. In addition, there is no risk assessment in place for the areas of the home or times of the day when the likelihood of such behaviours increases. Without such an assessment and oversight, staff have no guidance on when to be more vigilant and take effective action to protect young people.

When staff witness negative behaviours, they attempt to manage them reactively by talking to the young person, physically intervening and using sanctions. However, these strategies are not always appropriate and, while they are signed off appropriately, they are not evaluated overall and the staff continue to use the same sanction regardless of its effectiveness. The use of physical intervention is high, but not all of the staff are trained or updated in appropriate use of the interventions. This leaves the staff and young people at risk and there have been a series of assaults against staff during these times, resulting in criminal charges against the young people.

Appropriate health and safety procedures and partnership working with agencies, such as the local fire and rescue service, ensure that physical safeguards are in place. Regular fire drills take place and are recorded well.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The manager of the home is appropriately qualified and has been in post since July 2016. The manager was not present in the home at the time of the inspection, so it was carried out with the support of the deputy manager and the responsible individual.

There are gaps and shortfalls in monitoring in the home. For example, the manager's monthly monitoring sheet has not been completed since January 2017. The home has undergone a difficult period since that time, and management and monitoring processes that were previously in place and being followed were found to be incomplete or lacking in detail. The result is that practice has not been sufficiently challenged to affect change. A member of staff said: 'I feel that standards have slipped. There has been poor decision-making with the admissions over the last few months.'

The turnover of staff has been high for the last year; two staff were recruited and have left since the last inspection in January 2017. Recruitment files that were examined show that issues raised in the recruitment process were not challenged or explored sufficiently to ensure the safety of the young people and validate the ability and suitability of applicants.

All staff undertake an induction programme to equip them for their roles. However, this is recorded by a tick-box list and does not include evidence of competence being tested, despite this being detailed in the relevant policy. One member of staff who had recently been recruited had the whole induction programme signed off in one day, despite a lack of evidence of competency. In the supervision records of this member of staff, there is evidence of identifying areas for development that should have been covered during their induction.

The supervision log details that sessions are carried out within timescales. However, there is a lack of evidence of supervision notes on the file. In addition, notes that are

available are brief and the agenda not followed. In particular, there is no evidence of reflective practice and challenge, which impacts on the ability of staff to learn and develop from their practice. Staff meetings take place monthly, but there is no evidence that this opportunity is taken up by the manager to lead and develop the team.

Training for staff has primarily been online and matching the identified mandatory courses. One member of staff completed all of them in one night. This limits the learning opportunities for staff to basic knowledge and does not enable them to gain insight into the response to trauma needs of the young people. The workforce development plan lacks required information in relation to the staffing structure and the systems for the management of poor performance. This means that the expectation of standards of practice is not clear for the staff.

The home's locality risk assessment does not contain all of the required elements, including consultation with other professionals. This limits the impact of the assessment on staff and young people as it leaves them unaware of and unclear about potential risks in the community.

During the inspection, accounts relating to the ongoing finances of the home were requested. These could not be provided by the responsible individual during the inspection. A requirement has been made to provide Ofsted with financial information relating to the home. This is to provide the regulator with written confirmation of the financial stability of the home for all young people who are living there.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC429995

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: A Significant Other Limited

Registered provider address: Green Towers, Thistlewood Lane, Wolsingham, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL13 3HQ

Responsible individual: Donna Thorne

Registered manager: Darren Johnson

Inspector

Susan Atkinson-Millmoor, social care inspector

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