

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	01/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC457266
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Victoria Medlin
Inspector	Tracey Ledder

Inspection date	01/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Outstanding
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Inadequate
There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean young people are not protected. Their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and their care and experiences are poor.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC457266

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is inadequate because:

The registered manager made a decision recently to admit a young person despite indicators and evidence of significant, escalating and concerning behaviours. This decision has resulted in the functioning of the home spiralling into chaos and, at times, out of the control of staff.

This single decision has had a profound detrimental effect on young people who, prior to this, were making exceptional progress in all aspects of their lives. Young people, who once felt safe and secure living here, now report the opposite.

The registered manager identified that the changes at the home meant that young people were at risk of emotional and physical harm prior to this inspection. She failed to act in an effective and timely way to reduce risk.

The levels of aggression and violence within the home have continued to escalate over a number of weeks. Staff have failed to manage these behaviours effectively. At times, staff have withdrawn to the safety of the office leaving young people in the home without adult control or reassurance. This has placed young people in situations of risk.

Not all staff understand the expectations placed upon them by the registered manager in respect of behaviour management. This results in an inconsistent approach to care, confusing boundaries and frustration for young people.

Young people report that the staff do not intervene in incidents early enough or with an appropriate level of assertion. This was evidenced further during the inspection. One young person holds feelings of resentment as they felt some staff leave them to manage the behaviours of another young person.

Staff failed to effectively monitor one young person who was assessed to be high risk of going missing from home. Staff failed to identify that they were missing for at least 15 hours. This resulted in a delay in the police being informed and staff actively looking for him.

The children's home strengths

Historically, this home has been judged good or outstanding. Many of the areas of concern identified at this inspection are due to recent poor decisions when considering admissions to the home and the high levels of risk in the home.

The registered manager states that she is child focused. One of the factors preventing her from ending the destructive placement sooner was to prevent further placement moves for the young person. Unfortunately, this decision left others in the home unsafe.

Up until recently, this home provided young people with a nurturing and caring environment where they felt safe. They held good, trusting relationships with the adults who care for them. One young person stated, 'I just want things to go back to normal, how they were before'.

Young people have made exceptional progress in this home in all aspects of their lives; this progress has been disrupted by a poor decision which continues to have a profound effect.

The registered manager is respected by all who work with her. Staff feel supported by her and confident in her abilities. Despite the levels of violence and aggression in the home, the registered manager has continued to provide emotional support to her staff and young people. On one occasion, the registered manager sat up all night with a young person who was emotionally distressed due to issues outside of the 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 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
Regulation 11: The positive relationships Standard: In order to meet this standard the registered person must - (1) ensure that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on - (a) mutual respect and trust; (b) an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and (c) positive responses to other children and adults. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure - (a) that staff (i) meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; (ii) help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; (iv) help each child to develop and practice skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; (v) 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 understanding; (viii) strive to gain each child's trust; (ix) 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; (xi) de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iv)(v)(viii)(ix)(xi))	18/01/2016
Regulation 12 The protection of children standard: In order to meet this standard the registered person must - (1) ensure that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the	18/01/2016

registered person to ensure - (a) that staff - (i) 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; (ii) help each child understand how to keep safe; (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; (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, in particular effective monitoring of young people at risk of going missing from home but be embedded into care. Effective care and early intervention planning should support the reduction of risk in this area (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(vi) (b))	
Regulation 13 The leadership and management standard: In order to meet this standard the registered person must - (2)(c) ensure that the staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (2)(b) (c))	18/01/2016

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home is part of a large national company. It is currently registered to take up to three children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/03/2015	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
03/12/2014	CH - Full	Outstanding
05/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
25/04/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Inadequate
One young person's progress has been interrupted and has regressed due to the impact of a new admission to the home. She has suffered increased poor emotional well-being. She no longer feels safe and states that she does not want to remain living in this home. She has been distressed as a result of witnessing extreme aggression and violence within the home. Young people are struggling to build trusting and secure relationships with adults working in the home. Young people reported to the inspector that they do not feel listened to. The environment in which young people live is volatile, and incidents can happen without any warning. This leaves some young people with high anxiety. At times the care provided to young people is inconsistent. One young person has been able to gain the balance of power in the home by asserting aggressive and violent behaviours. Consequently, other young people do not feel safe or cared for appropriately. Not all young people are able to identify an adult that they can talk to if they are worried or concerned. The current situation in the home has put a strain on some of the more positive and trusting relationships, because young people question the staff's responses to incidents. This is a significant change from observations during previous inspections. Young people reported to the inspector that they do not feel cared for. One young person stated that staff rely on them to manage the behaviours of another young person when faced with violent and aggressive behaviours. She questions the level of care applied to some situations. One young person said, 'I cannot understand why the staff allow situations to continue without them intervening sooner'. One young person who made a complaint about physical harm had not been consulted as part of the investigative process. Conclusions were reached without the investigator gaining all the information required. This resulted in the voice of the child being lost. Despite the current turmoil within the home, one young person has started to	

attend and engage in education following a number of years of being disengaged in education. Staff support and encourage educational attendance. The young person stated that they felt proud of this achievement. Another has achieved GCSEs and since left formal education; she holds positive aspirations about her future.

Young people are encouraged to attend activities outside the home. Some of these activities are educationally based and others are fun activities that young people request. Young people advised the inspector that they appreciated these.

One young person is making good progress working towards their transition to adulthood. Staff support her in developing the skills required to manage the day-to-day tasks they will need to live independently. The young person is excited at the prospect of moving on and reports feeling ready for this transition.

This same young person has made significant progress in being able to share her wishes and feelings. It is unclear whether this is as a result of her being so unhappy living in this home during the current difficulties or due to them feeling more confident. However, staff attribute this to a growth in self-confidence and self-esteem. Whatever the rationale, the young person feels empowered to voice her views.

Young people are in good general health. The staff ensure that young people receive the right care for their physical and mental health. At times, staff work tirelessly to make sure the right support services are in place. This work has been significant for one young person who has made good progress in managing and understanding their own mental health needs. The young person is now able to identify when their mood is deteriorating and, as result, is able to talk to staff about this to obtain the right support when it is required.

Young people are encouraged to make decisions about the decor of the home. However, in recent weeks, significant damage to the home on numerous occasions has necessitated the removal of items that would help make it feel more homely. Young people are not happy about this and feel that staff should be more proactive in preventing damage occurring.

Young people have individualised bedrooms that are personalised to their taste. They are encouraged to keep their rooms clean and tidy. Where significant damage has been caused in bedrooms, staff have acted quickly to clear up the mess and damage.

Young people are supported to have positive contact with their families. Relationships and communication between the staff and families is good. Family

members report feeling supported by staff to have positive contact with their children.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
Young people told the inspector that they do not feel safe living at this home. This is attributed to a young person being admitted and subsequently engaged in violent and aggressive behaviour. Young people's emotional well-being and safety has been unacceptably compromised. This situation cannot continue. The current arrangements are not safe for young people and there are no immediate plans in place to reduce risks within the home. The home does not offer young people a safe, calm and nurturing environment. At times, young people's behaviours are beyond staff control. Consequently, staff have resorted to locking themselves in the office. At these times, all young people have been left in the unsafe environment. This is a serious dereliction of professional responsibility. One young person told the inspector that staff were not taking control of dangerous and frightening situations. At times, significant damage has occurred in the home and staff have failed to intervene early enough to secure the safety of other residents and themselves. This, at times, has resulted in calling the police for assistance and has led to young people becoming involved in the criminal justice system. On one occasion, one young person suffered an injury that needed urgent attention. Young people tried to raise the attention of staff for assistance. Staff had removed themselves to the safety of the locked office, so failed to respond in a timely way, resulting in another young person providing medical assistance. One young person was missing from home for a prolonged period without staff being aware. Failure to undertake robust checks on the young person resulted in a	

delayed response to search and return the young person safely. The young person was missing from the home for an unacceptable and extended period of time. Staff failed to consider the significant risks for this young person and monitor them appropriately.

Staff fail to apply the house rules about smoking for one young person. The young person continues to smoke in all areas of the home. A number of cigarette butts were found on the carpet in their bedroom by the inspector. This is a significant fire risk that has not been addressed and is, through staff complicity, being allowed to continue.

There have been two medication errors at the home; one is logged appropriately and the other was corrected only by the young person advising staff that they had prepared the wrong medication. In response, the registered manager arranged additional training for all staff.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
The registered manager takes full responsibility for the current situation in the home. She accepts that the latest admission to the home has had a significant detrimental effect on the functioning of the home. She accepts that, at times, young people and the staff, are not safe. During this inspection, the registered manager acknowledged that the home is unable to meet the needs of one young person. Consequently, formal notice was given to the placing authority during this inspection and the young person is moving on to a new home. Historically, the home has been judged as good or outstanding. This inspection cannot be judged similarly due, in the main, to a poor admission decision and a delay in ending the young person's placement once it had been established that his needs could not be met. Additionally, not all staff hold the skills, experience and understanding of attachment and trauma to manage current situations effectively and with confidence. These impacts negatively on other young people. The registered manager demonstrates commitment to providing good care to	

young people. However, the registered manager and the staff have lost their focus on young people and their safety due to the chaotic and difficult behaviours that they are trying to manage.

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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