

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC478707
Inspector	Fiona Littlefield
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	ERA Care Limited
Registered person address	Unit G22 Allen House The Maltings, Station Road Sawbridgeworth Hertfordshire CM21 9JX
Responsible individual	Stephen Milton
Registered manager	POST VACANT
Date of last inspection	N/A

Inspection date	12/01/2015
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Previous inspection	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	inadequate
Outcomes for children and young people	inadequate
Quality of care	inadequate
Keeping children and young people safe	inadequate
Leadership and management	inadequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	inadequate
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There are some serious shortfalls in areas of staff practice and the management of the service lacks effectiveness. For example, the arrangements for monitoring the home are inadequate. This means that there is a lack of drive to improve the quality of care. Some staff have not had specific training in key areas such as first aid, safeguarding and physical interventions. Shortfalls in care practice and a lack of daily routines jeopardise positive outcomes for young people.

In addition, some risk assessments, placement plans and a lack of information from some local authorities about young people's needs, further impact on staff's ability to meet all young people's needs. Insufficient action to address deficiencies in response to a recent fire inspection and lack of implementation of the organisation's behaviour management and missing policy, mean that the home does not safeguard young people effectively.

Some young people do not access education and are not provided with a stimulating environment and some areas of young people's health are not sufficiently addressed. As a result, the home does not ensure young people make progress.. Also, the local authority has not been informed of when young people are admitted and discharged from the home, and the location risk assessments requires improvement.

Young people say they are happy and safe at the home. They enjoy positive relationships with some staff and are helped to maintain contact with their family. Young people are provided with a comfortable and homely environment. They are cared for by staff who are suitably vetted.

The organisation has taken appropriate action in response to allegations made by young people. They have informed appropriate authorities of significant events that have occurred in the home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is one of a group of homes run by an independent provider. This home offers care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
12B (2001)	notify in writing the local authority for the area in which the home is located without delay of the admission of a child into and the discharge of the child from the children's home (Regulation 12B (1))	05/03/2015
16 (2001)	prepare and implement as required a missing child policy (Regulation 16(4)(b))	05/03/2015
16 (2001)	ensure that before implementing or making amendment which the registered person considers substantive to, the missing child policy, the registered person shall consult, and take into account the views of such local person's, bodies as the registered person considers appropriate and have regard to any relevant local authority or police protocol on missing children (Regulation 16(5))	05/03/2015
17B (2001)	implement a written policy (in this regulation referred to as the "behaviour management policy") which sets out the means whereby appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the home.(Regulation 17B (1)(b))	05/03/2015
18 (2001)	promote the educational achievement of children accommodated in a children's home, in particular by	05/03/2015

	ensuring that the routine of the home is organised so as to further children's participation in education, including regular attendance at school and participation in school activities of children of compulsory school age, regular attendance at college (Regulation 18(1)(b))	
20 (2001)	ensure that each child has access to such medical and psychological advice, treatment and other services, as he may require (Regulation 20 (2)(b))	05/03/2015
23 (2001)	ensure that any activities in which children participate are so far as reasonably practicable avoidable from risks (Regulation 23 (b))	05/03/2015
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed by him receive appropriate training (Regulation 27(4)(a))	05/03/2015
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 relating to this child, is kept up to date (Regulation 28 (1)(a)(b))	05/03/2015
31 (2001)	ensure when conducting a review for the purposes of paragraph (1A)(b), the registered person shall consult and take into account the views of such local bodies or persons as the registered manager considers appropriate (Regulation 31(1B))	05/03/2015
32 (2001)	ensure that the requirements of the regulatory reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and any regulations made under it, except for Article 23 (duty of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 32(1A)(b))	23/01/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure children know that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care (NMS 1)
- ensure the registered person has a written development plan, reviewed annually for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)
- ensure the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and

trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by the monitoring. (NMS 21.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **inadequate**

Some young people are not consistently developing self-esteem and confidence. They do not get the direct care they need from some staff. There are serious shortfalls in planning for important aspects of their care. For example, some young people continue to put themselves at repeated risk of harm by going missing. There is a lack of robust individual plans to keep them safe.

Some young people at the home do not attend school. Their educational plans are confused and as a result, they do not have access to a full educational programme. Also, some young people do not have access to a stimulating environment or routine to their day, to encourage them to engage in educational activities. For some, this has resulted in them having made little progress in planning for their futures. This has had an impact on their self-esteem and compromises their potential for academic achievement.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family members who are important to them. Staff support and facilitate individual arrangements and some young people have their own mobile telephones to keep in contact with their families. This helps them maintain relationships with the significant people in their lives and to support their emotional health. A parent reported that the home is good at keeping in contact with them to inform them of events. However, some young people can be influenced by negative influences in the community and they lack opportunities to discuss this with staff. As a result, they lack awareness of potential risks outside the home.

Some young people's health needs are adequately met. For example, they eat a healthy and varied diet and do not get involved in substance misuse. However, some are not accessing the services they require, such as child and adolescent mental health services, or taking the medication prescribed to them. On occasion, some young people are missing for long periods of time. There is potential impact on their health and safety, as it is unknown where they are, where they are sleeping and if they are accessing sufficient food. They may be very vulnerable in this situation.

Young people engage with staff to prepare meals and to shop for food and toiletries. This helps to build their confidence and encourages good relationships in the home. They are helped to choose a balanced diet, wash their own clothes and to budget their finances. This prepares young people to develop the practical skills they need to take care of themselves, in preparation for adult life.

Quality of care **inadequate**

Young people's relationships with staff are inconsistent and they struggle to develop attachments with key people. Staff do, on occasion, seek young people's views, for example regarding choices of menus and activities. However, there is a lack of clear individual sessions with young people to enable them to raise concerns they may have, or for staff to robustly seek their views and address concerns.

Some young people do not have basic placement plans in place. They lack documentation from some placing authorities, and records are out of date. This means that there is no accurate information that clearly identifies young people's objectives. There is a lack of robust action to address the lack of effective plans for these young people. As a result, staff are inconsistent in how they respond to young people, because there is no clear guidance, and young people who present with challenging behaviour are not given consistent boundaries.

The acting manager has recently requested and attended a professionals meeting with young people's placing authorities to address concerns for some regarding the lack of education provided. However, staff do not consistently implement a daily routine for young people who are either not engaging in education, or have not been provided with an adequate educational provision by their placing authority. Young people are late in waking in the morning and are often in bed until midday. There is a lack of structure to the day and young people are not provided with a stimulating environment. Therefore, staff do not support and enable young people to engage fully in their education.

Young people have access to a suitable range of activities, both in the home and within the local community. At times, some young people engage in activities such as meal preparation, shopping and going to the cinema. However, staff do not consistently encourage and engage young people to partake in these activities, or develop new interests. As a result, some young people continue to engage in risk taking behaviours and lack confidence in learning and enjoying new skills.

Young people are registered with local health professionals such as doctors and dentists. Medication administration is sufficient and staff maintain clear records. However, not all young people are able to access the services they need. Some young people should be taking medication, however, this is not available to them in the home. In addition, they have not been able to access the services of some external agencies, such as child and adolescent mental health services. While this is not solely the responsibility of the organisation, there has been a lack of robust action by the home to ensure that all young people have access to services to meet all their health needs.

The home provides young people with appropriate individual and communal accommodation. There are adequate levels of privacy for young people; they have their own bedroom keys and privacy locks for bathrooms. The home provides space for young people to spend time alone or remain part of a group. In addition, young people are provided with outdoor space. Their living environment is well furnished

and comfortable.

Keeping children and young people safe inadequate

Young people say they feel safe. However, not all young people could identify a member of staff they would talk to if they have a concern.

While the organisation has a safeguarding policy in place, not all staff have received safeguarding training. Where there have been concerns regarding suspicions or allegations of concern, the organisation has taken appropriate action. For example, staff have informed the appropriate agencies in line with the policy.

The home's missing policy is not in line with the local authority policy or regulation and the home does not have a running away and missing from home and care protocol. Staff actively seek young people when they are missing, they will go to places where they believe the young person is, contact the young person and their families and friends. However, there is a lack of effective strategies to discourage young people from leaving the home. When young people return, staff do not consistently seek from young people their whereabouts or information that could inform staff of the risks to young people while they are missing. As a result, young people's missing episodes do not significantly reduce and they remain vulnerable.

The location risk assessment does not include some of the information provided by other agencies such as the police. In addition, there has been a lack of robust action to seek the views of external agencies to clearly inform staff of any potential risks within the area. As a result, the risks to young people from within the local area are not fully identified and understood.

Young people's risk assessments are not up to date and some information is confusing. Recent incidents, such as a young person making burns to their ceiling, have not been managed effectively and there is no risk assessment in place for this young person to prevent further occurrences. Some risk assessments contain information that is inconsistent with records held within the home. As a result, practice is not consistently informed by clearly assessed risks, and potential hazards to young people are not always clearly identified.

Staff do not consistently implement or fully understand the service's behaviour management policy. While there have been no physical interventions or measures of control, young people have presented with some challenging behaviour and this has not been managed in a consistent way. For example, on occasion young people make threats to staff and following this they have been taken out, such as to go shopping. There is no system that rewards or praises positive behaviour from young people.

The service does not provide a consistent framework of appropriate routine and boundaries to reinforce positive behaviour. As a result, young people are not encouraged to develop skills, take responsibility for their behaviour, maintain positive relationships or become able to resolve conflicts positively.

Young people are protected by sound recruitment processes that ensure staff are carefully selected and vetted. This prevents unsuitable people from working in the home.

There is a lack of robust action to prevent fire. A recent fire inspection revealed significant deficiencies, for example that some bedroom doors are not self-closing. While the bedrooms occupied by the young people currently living at the home do have self-closing doors, this is not the case with all bedrooms. This does not ensure that young people and staff are sufficiently protected in the case of a fire.

Leadership and management **inadequate**

The home lacks effective and efficient management. The previous Registered Manager left in November 2014. The organisation appointed a manager, however, the individual left without notice in December 2014. Since then, the responsible individual has assumed responsibility as both the responsible individual and acting manager. He is aware of the managerial responsibility of the role in leading improvement in the outcomes for young people in the home, and acknowledges that follow up progress is not sufficient.

The service has a Statement of Purpose that details the aims and objectives of the home. This informs parents, placing authorities and interested parties of information regarding the service.

The monitoring arrangements for the home are inadequate. There is a lack of evidence to show that internal monitoring is taking place. Concerns about specific incidents and patterns, and about safety issues, are not being identified so that immediate action can be taken to address them. External monitoring occurs monthly; however, this has failed to identify a number of the shortfalls within this report. In addition, when areas of concern have been identified, there has been a lack of action by the service to address these areas. For example, with regard to making alternative arrangements to the security of the side gate, which is secured with a padlock, however, it is an identified exit in the event of fire. Further, there is no development plan in place for the home. As a result, there is a lack of systems within the home to drive improvement in the quality of care to young people.

The acting manager provides regular supportive supervision for staff, providing them with opportunities to focus practice on young people and to raise any concerns. However, not all staff are appropriately trained and, as a result, they lack the in-depth knowledge and understanding required to fully meet young people's needs..

Some staff have not received mandatory training in safeguarding and physical intervention. Also, on occasion, shifts have not had a staff member present who is first aid trained. This could compromise the safety of the young people, should a medical emergency arise.

The acting manager has failed to notify the local authority of the admission of young people to, or discharge from the home. This is a breach in regulation.

Significant events are reported to Ofsted and placing authorities. Records of young people are adequately structured and held securely and confidentially. However, some young people's records, such as placement plans, are not up to date and lack detail. In addition, not all young people have the required placing authority's documents, such as their care plans. While this is not solely the responsibility of the organisation, there is a lack of sufficient action taken to ensure these records are held within the home. As a result, key information required for individual young people is not available to identify their needs and inform their care.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.

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