

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	12/01/2015

Inspection date	09/03/2015
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Previous inspection	inadequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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The full inspection of the home in January 2015 identified shortfalls that raised concerns about the safety and quality of care provided to young people.

Staff had not received essential training in areas such as safeguarding, which meant that young people were not protected. Staff were not implementing the home's behaviour management and missing policy and as a result, behaviour was not managed consistently. Placement plans and risk assessments lacked information, which had an impact on the ability of staff to meet all young people's needs. Some young people were not accessing full time education or specialist health services and were not supported by robust daily routines in the home. As a result, young people did not achieve positive outcomes in the home.

The responsible individual has addressed the majority of these shortfalls. Robust policies have been developed to assess and manage risk and promote positive behaviour. There have been improvements in staff training, external monitoring arrangements and partnership working. These have contributed to the drive to improve quality of care in the home.

This inspection identified one shortfall in respect of improving the home's policy for missing children so that it is in line with regulation and the local authority policy.

Young people who were living in the home left a week after the last full inspection. There have been no new admissions since this time.

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.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/01/2015	Full	inadequate

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
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 or bodies as the registered person considers appropriate and have regard to any relevant local authority or police protocol on missing children. (Regulation 16(5) (i) (ii))	22/04/2015

Recommendations

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

- take action to address any issues of concern identified by the provider or

which is raised with them, specifically, respond to actions raised within external monitoring in the home. (NMS 21.10)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

There were no young people living in the home at the time of this inspection. The judgement for outcomes is based on the review of young people prior to moving on and action staff have taken since.

Young people benefit from relationships with staff because staff have awareness of their individual needs. This is likely to help young people achieve positive progress given their starting points.

The new key worker system defines expectations of staff so they understand the support that young people need. Key worker meetings will take place on a planned and spontaneous basis. A child psychiatrist will attend the home as a consultant for both staff and residents. This has the potential to lead to improved emotional well-being of young people in the home.

The behaviour management policy provides a framework for staff, to support young people to achieve their full potential and develop a positive self-view.

Young people benefit from comfortable and safe surroundings in the home where there is ample room for communal living and individual space. They are able to learn independent skills at their own pace, in order to prepare for the transition to adult life.

Young people also benefit from accessing the wider community. Staff have undertaken a local risk assessment, which identifies possible risks and appropriate resources. This enables young people to develop social skills and confidence.

Quality of care **adequate**

While there have not been any young people placed since the last inspection, the manager has been purposeful and committed to developing a more robust framework of policies and procedures to support prospective placements.

Staff are now guided by a clear outline of the duties and responsibilities of key working for young people in the home. These guidelines have been discussed at staff meetings where staff reflected on the importance of engaging with young people on a regular and consistent basis so that they know what is happening.

Staff have been supported by the recent appointment of a child psychiatrist who visits the home on a consultancy basis. They are enthusiastic about engaging young

people in a positive regime.

Full care plans are now held for young people who have lived in the home. All required documentation has been added to individual files, along with details of behaviour management plans, risk assessments and daily logs. This provides a permanent and complete record of placements and establishes what progress had been achieved against objectives.

The referral procedure has been strengthened so that there will be an immediate, clear and detailed picture of young people's needs and vulnerabilities. There are plans to cover this in depth at the placement planning meetings. Managers acknowledge that risk assessments need to be continually reviewed. They plan to discuss risk assessments for young people in supervision, team meetings and key worker sessions. This is likely to contribute to keeping young people safe and at the centre of care planning.

Following consultation with the child psychiatrist in team meetings, staff are empathetic and enthusiastic about helping young people to access activities in the local area, including sports and leisure pursuits. At a team meeting, a staff member said: 'The reason that he might not get up is because he feels that there is nothing to get up for and if this is the case, it is the fault of the home.' Staff have begun to gather information about local resources for young people.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Managers have taken action to provide a safe environment with appropriately trained staff who can safeguard and protect young people. Staff training has now been updated and all staff have completed training in first aid, safeguarding and protecting young people from abuse by sexual exploitation. This training has helped to equip staff with the knowledge they need to safely care for young people.

The missing from care policy is not in line with regulation or local authority policy. This is particularly in relation to a young person's age, whether they are considered a persistent absconder or whether they are considered to be at risk of sexual exploitation.

The responsible individual has completed a local risk assessment for the home. They have liaised with the police, local schools, the youth offending service, local doctors and local authority commissioning teams to identify risks. This enhances staff knowledge and understanding of local and community risks.

Managers have drafted a behaviour management policy based on a framework of appropriate routines and behavioural boundaries. It emphasises the need for positive engagement rather than passive interaction, to communicate to young people that staff are interested in them and want them to make progress. This provides clear

guidance for staff to support young people to take responsibility for their behaviour, maintain relationships and learn to resolve conflicts constructively.

Leadership and management

adequate

The home has been without a Registered Manager since November 2014. These circumstances have had a direct impact on continuity and consistency of care in the home. A new manager has been interviewed but the appointment has not yet been confirmed.

New staff have been recruited since the last inspection; they have met with the responsible individual for team meetings and supervision. Staff have all received mandatory training. They speak highly of the importance that management places on training, which is seen as an ongoing commitment for both sides.

Management has now notified the local authority of admissions and discharges from the home as required by regulation.

The external monitoring of the home has started to provide a robust and appropriately critical view of the home. A number of tasks have been identified, with clear actions to take in order to secure and sustain improvement. Management has responded to most of these, although some actions remain, such as reviewing the sanctions policy and building relationships with the head of virtual schools for the local area.

Management have produced a development plan, which demonstrates the commitment to drive improvement in the quality of care in the home. There are plans for issues raised in external monitoring to be fed back to staff through team meetings, supervisions and team training days.

Managers have taken action to prevent fire in the home, with self-closing doors now installed. In addition, the side gate, which is an identified exit in the case of fire, is no longer secured with bolts. These measures contribute to adequate protection in the event of fire.

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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