

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	15/02/2016
Unique reference number	SC478707
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
Inspector	Natalie Burton

Inspection date	15/02/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Declined in effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
There are serious failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC478707

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is inadequate because:

- A lack of adequate staffing and oversight has resulted in children at the home being involved in a serious incident that significantly impacted on their safety. The home has failed to fully robustly investigate the circumstances leading to the incident, in order to prevent a re-occurrence.
- On occasion, staff have failed to sufficiently address and inform management of potential indications of bullying. This means that young people are not fully safeguarded or helped to develop an understanding of their behaviour.
- The home's location risk assessment lacks a full review of the potential risks and hazards to young people. It does not demonstrate how the areas of concern can be reduced or inform potential new admissions.
- On occasion staff have not implemented the home's behaviour management policy. When managing low level challenging behaviour, they have failed to de-escalate situations effectively.
- There are few measures of control used within the home. On occasions when they have been used, the staff have failed to document them properly.
- The home has not had a registered manager since November 2014. While the home has made attempts through previous appointments, and recent recruitment events, the home continues to not have an individual appointed to manage the home.
- The staff have, on occasion, failed to seek medical advice to meet some young people's health needs.
- Internal monitoring is insufficient to continuously improve the quality of care provided to young people, and identify potential trends and patterns.

The children's home strengths

- All young people have made progress in education and attend their educational provision. Staff provide young people with a structured daily routine, and praise young people's achievements.
- Young people speak positively about the care they receive. They have positive relationships with staff and could identify individuals that they would talk to if they had a concern.
- The staff support the young people to have contact with their family and individuals that are significant to them.
- The home supports young people to challenge decisions made about their future and current care arrangements.

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
<p>12: The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard in particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person:</p> <p>(2) (b) to ensure 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. *</p>	09/03/2016
<p>10: The health and well-being standard</p> <p>In order to meet the health and well-being standard, in particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure:</p> <p>(2)(c) that each child has access to such dental, medical, nursing, psychiatric and psychological advice, treatment and other services as the child may require.</p>	18/03/2016
<p>11: The positive relationships standard</p> <p>In order to meet the positive relationships standard in particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure:</p> <p>(2)(a)(xi) that staff escalate confrontations with, or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children.</p>	18/03/2016
<p>13: The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard in particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to:</p>	18/03/2016

<p>(2) (d) in particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child.</p> <p>(f) 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.</p>	
<p>The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if there is no registered manager in respect of the home. (Regulation 27(1)(a))</p>	<p>31/03/2016</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes (a)(i) – (viii) and (b)(i) and (ii) and (c). (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(b)(c))</p>	<p>18/03/2016</p>
<p>The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purpose of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). (Regulation 46(1))</p>	<p>18/03/2016</p>

* These requirements are subject to statutory requirement notice.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home is managed by a private organisation. It provides care and accommodation for four young people of either gender, who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/12/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
09/03/2015	Full	Adequate
12/01/2015	Full	Inadequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Inadequate</p>
<p>A recent safeguarding concern, has considerably impacted on the vulnerable young people living at the home. This is significant, and impacts on the overall effectiveness of the home.</p> <p>A motivated, flexible and positive staff team care for the young people. The young people are positive about their relationships with all staff. Staff engage and spend quality time with young people. All young people spoken to could identify staff they feel they can talk to if they had a concern, and are positive about the care they receive. Staff know young people well.</p> <p>The young people enjoy living at the home. One young person described the staff as 'fun', and all know that staff care about them. Staff responses to young people are mainly nurturing, welcoming and respectful. The ability of staff members to build good relationships with young people is a strength of the service.</p> <p>Staffing at the home is not sufficient to ensure children's needs are consistently met. While the organisation will always ensure that the young people attend appointments, young people spoke of their frustration at having to wait for enough staff to do so. In order to meet the young people's basic needs staff have needed to work double and, on occasions, triple shifts. A failure to ensure a sufficient number of experienced staff were on duty to properly supervise the young people has contributed to a serious safeguarding incident. Staffing and management oversight are not sufficient to consistently meet the needs of the young people.</p> <p>The young people's placements plans are individualised and provide staff with basic information to provide an overview of the young person. Plans promote improvements in specific areas of individual development, and are implemented by the staff team.</p> <p>All young people make progress in their education. Some young people make good progress, attending regularly and achieving well. This was noted by a social worker, who reported: 'There has been a massive improvement'. The staff and management have developed good working relationships with young people's educational placements, and communicate well with them. They support young people with homework, and ensure they have access to the materials required to support their learning. Some young people were not accessing full time education at the time of the inspection. Staff were providing a routine that will support their attendance when educational provision is identified for them. Some young people</p>	

receive rewards for recognised achievement.

All young people are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician. The support young people to attend their appointments, including those young people who are engaging with the children and adolescent mental health team. The home works effectively with the other health agencies to ensure young people's routine health appointments are attended. To further support young people's emotional needs, the organisation's therapist meets with the staff to have group supervision. This enables staff to discuss and gain advice to further support young people. However, on occasions, staff have not been proactive in ensuring medical opinion is sought following incidents in the home. Young people are not consistently provided with an option to access medical support, and advice is not always sought to see if medical support is required. This does not ensure that young people health needs are fully met.

The staff and management work hard to gain young people's views, and this is a strength of the service. Systems, such as key work sessions, residents meetings and house meetings ensure young people have a formal forum to have their views heard. In addition, where young people have raised concerns, for example, with regard to personal matters, the staff support young people well, and help to resolve any anxiety. The interim manager is a strong advocate for young people and will support young people to challenge decisions made about their future or current plans.

The young people access activities they enjoy, such as trampolining, cinema and bowling. Some young people enjoy reading and others have an interest in helping with the vegetable patch that the home is looking to start, when the weather is right. Inside the home, the young people have access to activities such as books, board games, a computer and pool table. The staff encourage young people to take physical exercise as well, through going for walks and days out at the beach.

The staff support young people to have contact with their family and friends, and ensure this is always with agreement with the placing authorities and families. The staff transport young people, and stay where required until their contact is over. In addition, the home ensures that families are kept up to date with information.

The young people are supported to develop and learn independence skills in line with their age and ability. They receive practical guidance about budgeting, cooking, using public transport, managing their time, and social and self-care skills. This prepares them to mature into valuable young adults in society.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
<p>Young people do not generally go missing from the home. However, an incident has occurred recently where a lack of adequate supervision by staff resulted in young people being able to leave the home in the middle of the night, taking a car and putting themselves in danger without staff being aware of what was happening. This is a significant safeguarding concern and the young people involved could have been seriously harmed. The interim manager has not yet completed an investigation to establish how the incident occurred, and as such is not fully informed to be able to make the required changes to prevent a recurrence. The organisation has taken some immediate action, implementing a waking night staff rota and raising the awareness of staff members to be alert to the possibility of young people leaving the home. They plan to fit door alarms. However, until a robust investigation is completed, not all potential action is taken to prevent recurrence.</p> <p>All the young people say they feel safe. They can identify members of staff they can talk to and they feel staff listen to them. While there have been no allegations made against staff, all staff spoken to were aware of the action to take if there was a concern about staff practice, or an allegation against a member of staff. The interim manager has developed a good working relationship with the local authority designated person, who also provided positive feedback with regard to the home's communication.</p> <p>The staff provide young people with appropriate boundaries and structure. The young people do not generally present with risk taking or challenging behaviour, although the recent incident shows the need for vigilance. For some young people, they have reduced their risk taking behaviour, such as providing staff with some information of where they are when on free time. This is because staff spent time with them, and have built good working relationships. However, on occasion, staff response to some young people's inappropriate behaviour is not in line with the behaviour management policy of the home. For example, staff are not consistently able to de-escalate situations. While measures of control are rare, and there have been no physical interventions, on occasion not all sanctions have been recorded on the dedicated system. While there is limited impact on young people, this does not ensure that measures of control used are open and transparent.</p> <p>Recruitment within the home is robust. The organisation ensures that all staff are suitably vetted prior to working with young people.</p> <p>The staff ensure that young people are aware of how to make a complaint. During the inspection, the young people confirmed this and feel listened to by the staff. The interim manager has implemented a new system to record young people's 'grins and groans.' This demonstrates that young people's views are heard and</p>	

acted on. However, on some occasions when young people have had disagreements or complained about how another young person has spoken or reacted to them. This is not robustly recorded to enable monitoring to occur. While young people are clear they are not being bullied, they did raise concern about some interactions between themselves, and how their actions could be perceived. Staff are not taking sufficient action to prevent such concerns escalating.

The young people live in a well-furnished, welcoming and homely environment. However, while the organisation has taken some action to seek information from appropriate agencies, it has not adequately assessed potential hazards arising from the location of the home, such as the potential risk for children from the home being located on a busy main road. This means that not all potential hazards to young people are considered and they do not inform decisions about future placements.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
<p>The home has not had a registered manager for nearly 16 months, despite this being a requirement made at the last inspection. The organisation has taken action to try to recruit a manager, but it has failed to appoint a suitable individual who will meet the requirements of the role. The organisation's responsible individual is currently acting as the home's interim manager. The organisation has recently identified an internal candidate with the necessary experience, but they had not been appointed or registered at the time of the inspection.</p> <p>The statement of purpose provides information about the ethos and objectives of the home, and the resources available to support young people in placement. The young people are provided with a guide that clearly explains the service they will receive. The interim manager ensures that the document is updated when required, such as to reflect any changes in staffing.</p> <p>The home's development plan identifies some of the shortfalls identified within this report, such as recruitment of staff. The interim manager is working through the plan to improve the quality of care provided, although significant shortfalls remain and only one of the two requirements made at the last inspection has been met.</p> <p>The staff team speak very positively of the support they receive from the interim manager and the organisation, and how vital this support is. The interim manager is approachable, and accessible to all staff. Staff who have recently joined the organisation state that the induction to the organisation is good, with training and shadow opportunities available before they begin their work with young people. All</p>	

staff working at the home have the required mandatory training. The staff team are provided with individual supervision by the interim manager. Additionally, all staff have group supervision with the organisation's therapist. This provides them with an opportunity to raise concern, develop their skills, and to discuss strategies to meet the young people's needs.

The staff team is inexperienced. The organisation ensures that there is always a more experienced member of staff on duty. However, demands on the team have increased following a recent admission, appointments and contact with family for young people and the recent safeguarding incident. This has meant a heavy reliance on staff. At times staff have worked triple and double shifts, and on occasions have had to work a day shift with a planned waking night, in order to meet the young people's basic needs. This demonstrates that the home does not have a sufficient number of staff.

The interim manager has developed good working relationships with placing authorities, quality assurance visitors and missing person police officers. This has been noted by a social worker as a real improvement in the service. The interim manager and staff ensure that all agencies are kept up to date with all information required. A professional reported that the interim manager is very receptive to advice given to improve the service, and works well with them.

Although the interim manager undertakes some internal monitoring, this is ineffective as the home has failed to identify shortfalls and the action required to address them, so failing to drive improvement in the quality of care. The organisation's external monitoring reports have similarly failed to identify some of the shortfalls within this report and they have not been consistently sent to Ofsted in a timely manner. The organisation has acted to address this through the recent appointment of a new independent person.

The interim manager ensures that all appropriate parties are informed of significant incidents. The management and staff at the home have worked hard and made significant efforts to improve the quality of care provided to the young people. The organisation has emphasised its commitment to making the improvements required to ensure the home is managed well and services are provided to young people in line with the home's statement of purpose. However, the recent safeguarding incident has significantly impacted on the young people at the home.

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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