

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	02/02/2017
Unique reference number	1227788
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Solent Child Care Ltd
Registered provider address	Solent Child Care Ltd, 9 St George's Yard, Farnham GU9 7LW

Responsible individual	Charlotte Tanner
Registered manager	Kirsty Sheppard
Inspector	Heather Chaplin

Inspection date	02/02/2017
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judges that it has improved effectiveness. Since the previous inspection, both young people have made very good overall progress. One young person, who has special educational needs, is doing exceptionally well in school. He has further increased his attendance to 100% in recent weeks, with a consistently high level of attainment. This young person is also looking to the future and has successfully completed a day's work experience with a major retail chain. His next step will be to attend a college interview with a view to training to be a painter and decorator. One young person has recently moved into semi-independence. Before she left, she created a remarkable hand-made book for the staff. In the book, she explains in powerful poetry, prose and artwork how the home has made a huge difference to her life. One comment made was, 'All of the words in the entire world would not nearly be able to express how grateful I am to all of you. You took me in from a life of madness, no structure and complete loneliness and gave me stability, brought my smile back and made me able to see my future again.' The home has done well to drive forward the independence plan for this young person, and ensure that she received sufficient support to apply for accommodation in the area of her choosing. There is daily phone contact, and during the inspection one member of staff was travelling to the young person's new home to support her. The two young people enjoy a very positive relationship, allowing them to work through minor frustrations that arise when individuals from different backgrounds share the same household. This ability to understand another person's perspective, and consider their feelings, is an important skill which will be useful in their future lives. The young people value each other's friendship, and are in regular phone contact now that one young person has moved on. The home continues to provide a wide range of constructive and enjoyable activities for the young people, which introduce them to new experiences and expand their horizons. They are encouraged to keep memory books to help them	

to recall their time in the home after they have moved on.

The staff provide exceptionally good-quality, nurturing care for young people, who may have moved into the home after a period of time in secure accommodation, or when previous relationships have broken down. The home provides an opportunity for the young people to benefit from focused and dedicated staff input, to help them to adjust to an open setting and begin to turn their lives around.

Since the previous inspection, there have been three instances when a young person has gone missing. One of these was a situation when a young person stayed on a visit for longer than agreed, but was found and collected by staff members within a relatively short period of time.

The other two incidents involved a young person who has now left the home. This young person was, for a period of about two months, unsettled by their impending move from the home, where they had been happy and settled. They were also concerned by what they perceived to be slow progress on the local authority's part in making plans with them for their independence. This led to a number of incidents when the young person resorted to the use of alcohol and other substances in an attempt to manage their feelings. On two occasions, the young person was out overnight and placed herself at some degree of risk, although the extent of the risk has been difficult to quantify.

The staff responded to the situation appropriately through dedicated work with the young person. They supported her well and advocated strongly with the placing authority for a coherent transition plan. When this had no effect, the home had to take more assertive strategic action with the placing authority to ensure that the young person had an objective towards which she could work. This meant that the young person did not have to engage in risk-taking behaviour to achieve her aim to move on, so the level and frequency of incidents reduced again before the move.

There have been some restraints since the previous inspection. These are recorded by hand in a hard-bound log but, although all the information required by regulation is present, it is not always easy to follow. Discussion took place during the inspection about whether the introduction of an electronic log would help the staff to ensure that all the required elements are recorded in sufficient detail.

In one instance, the member of staff did not record full information about a particular hold. This entry says that a young person was held in an authorised technique, but then 'lowered to the ground'. What was omitted was the important information that the staff did not themselves deliberately place the young person on the ground and that the hold was released immediately when the young person went to the floor. The staff's actions did not in any way demean the young person, who was given the space and time to regain control over their own behaviour. This means that the shortfall is in recording and not in restraint practice.

The registered manager had already identified this matter and had discussed it

with the staff member concerned. However, the recording was not clarified by the additional explanation, and did not show any evidence of management monitoring. A recommendation has been made.

After the full inspection in August 2016, the registered manager stood down from her role in order to set up a second children's home for the company. An interim manager, previously the home's deputy, was appointed and has recently been registered to manage this home. The new registered manager holds a qualification at level 4 in leadership and management, obtained in 2007. She has many years of relevant experience in working with children and young people, and prior to her promotion had spent sufficient time with the company to become familiar with their ethos and procedures.

Since the previous inspection, the manager has had to deal with a number of challenges. These have included one isolated concern about staff practice. The registered manager responded very swiftly, decisively and professionally to this situation. She took the correct action and has shown strong leadership to her team during a difficult time.

Some staff members have recently left the home. The registered manager has acted promptly to recruit more staff. In the meantime, shifts have been covered by the registered manager and her deputy. This has avoided the use of agency staff, which in turn helps to maintain continuity of care for the young people.

The home benefits from exceptionally good internal and external monitoring. The independent visitor was present during this inspection. He provides clear and detailed monthly reports on the conduct of the home and the young people's progress. The independent visits include consultation with the young people, parents and social workers, providing regular opportunities for them to express their views. This positive process is utilised well and helps to drive improvements in the quality of care.

The registered manager and staff continue to work effectively with other services and agencies in order to support the young people. They have positive relationships with local authorities, the police, army cadets, the local child and adolescent mental health service and educational establishments.

The home continues to be extremely well kept, bright and clean, with high-quality furnishings and fittings. On the rare occasions when damage has been sustained, it has been repaired promptly.

The registered manager has fully actioned the requirement to undertake a risk assessment on an unrestricted first-floor window in relation to the occupants of the home. She has also actioned the recommendation made at the full inspection. The statement of purpose has now been updated and includes a photograph of the home. The statement of purpose meets regulatory requirements and has been submitted to Ofsted.

No major shortfalls were found during this inspection. One point for further development is the home's recording system. Currently, summary information is kept in hand-written form in hard-bound logs. This meets regulatory requirements but, as the company develops and expands, senior leaders may wish to consider moving towards electronic systems that provide professionally presented records and useful management monitoring tools.

The home is situated in a compact, traditional village close to a larger town. This provides a cohesive, safe community environment for the young people but is still within easy reach of a wide range of facilities.

Information about this children's home

This privately operated children's home offers care and accommodation for up to two children and young people irrespective of gender, who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is one of two establishments owned by the same company, situated in the south and south-west of England.

The home's original remit was to specialise in short-term assessments and bridging placements of up to 28 days. Since registration, it has extended its provision so that the young people may, subject to the local authority's plans, stay for longer periods of up to 12 months.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/08/2016	Full inspection	Good

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.

Recommendation

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

- Records of restraint must be kept and should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly when any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. In particular, ensure that when management monitoring identifies a lack of detailed explanation in restraint recording, the log shows this process clearly. If there is a need for staff to add to the record, this addition should be signed and dated. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', April 2015, page 49, paragraph 9.59).

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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