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Registered provider: Positive Pathways Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides care and accommodation for up to three young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 12 to 13 December 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 24 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Young people are making significant progress in all areas of their lives.
- Young people are exceptionally well cared-for by staff who clearly demonstrate their commitment to meeting their individual needs and keeping them safe.
- Care planning is detailed, collaborative and child-centred. It is informed by research-based practice, is reviewed frequently and results in enhanced life chances for young people.
- Staff manage young people's safety extremely well, resulting in a reduction in behaviours that put them at risk of harm.
- Excellent partnership working with specialist health services is consistently improving young people's emotional health, behaviour and resilience.
- Young people have benefited from a stable, qualified and experienced staff team. This has enabled them to develop trusting and respectful relationships.
- The exceptional commitment shown by the registered manager and staff team ensures that young people feel highly valued.
- The registered manager and staff are ambitious and have high aspirations for young people. They show tenacity in helping young people achieve their individual goals.
- This service is highly regarded by placing authorities and families. They report that managers and staff consistently go 'above and beyond' expectation in their support of young people.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/01/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The staff team is highly experienced, qualified and dedicated to providing a very high standard of care for young people. Staff have successfully built close and trusting bonds with young people, which has increased young people's ability to make and sustain good relationships with others.

Young people are recognised as individuals. Staff understand young people's specific needs and develop ways of working with them that are entirely personalised. Young people's plans and assessments reflect the very different ways in which they are supported, and clearly identify what works best for each young person.

Staff consistently deliver exceptionally personalised care plans and intervention programmes that encourage young people to thrive in all areas of their development. In addition, they are extremely motivated and have high aspirations for young people. Promoting positive outcomes is central to the work and ethos of the home. One young person said, 'It has changed my life moving here.'

Young people feel that staff listen to them. Staff gather young people's opinions on a daily basis through general conversation, and more formally through key-worker sessions and monthly questionnaires. Regular and effective one-to-one key-working sessions with young people are undertaken by the staff team. These sessions are very detailed, and address a range of topics relevant to the individual young person, including their overall progress and experiences. This includes risks that they may encounter in the community, drug and alcohol misuse, internet safety and education. One young person said, 'I think what has made a real difference is the staff. Once I started to listen to them, I came to the conclusion that they do really want the best for me and they do mean well. They explain why they are worried and what we need to think about when out with friends or using the internet.'

The quality of relationships between young people and staff is exceptional. Young people can identify adults they trust and who they can share their fears and concerns with. This leads to young people feeling secure and cared-for. The inspector observed relationships between staff and young people that evidenced highly positive, humorous and supportive interactions. The home feels relaxed and is fun to be in, and the atmosphere is homely. Staff spoken to during this inspection showed commitment and care towards the young people, wanting the best for them in every area of their lives.

Appropriately trained and experienced staff have a clear understanding of young people's health needs and they are addressed exceptionally well. This is supported by excellent joint working with specialist therapeutic services, such as child and adolescent mental health services and an eating disorders service. Specialist services provide direct support to young people to enable them to deal more effectively with difficult emotions and trauma. The same services also provide valued training sessions to staff. This enables the staff team to evaluate its practice and consider research and developments in specific areas, such as attachment and social learning theory. In addition, the provider's clinical psychologist guides staff through monthly clinical review meetings.

These meetings help to ensure that the support young people receive is tailored to their individual needs and gives young people the best possible opportunity to make progress and develop their potential. One specialist health professional said, 'I can't praise them [the staff group] enough for the progress they have achieved. They have a holistic understanding of [the child's] support needs.' Young people benefit from improved emotional health because of the consistent support they receive from a committed and knowledgeable team.

Most young people make very good educational progress from the point they are at when they arrive at the home. Young people who have previously found it challenging to engage in education now have very good attendance and their progress is beyond original expectations. One young person successfully attained four GCSEs in the summer and has successfully started a full-time college course. These are exceptional achievements for a young person who has been unable to access full-time education for the last four years because of frequent hospital admissions. When young people arrive at the home without an education placement, the manager challenges virtual headteachers effectively to find suitable schools in the area as quickly as is possible. As a result, all young people now have appropriate education provision suited to their needs. As one local authority educational adviser commented, 'It's so refreshing to see such a proactive approach.' Young people and staff alike take pride in the young people's progress.

Staff support young people to develop independence skills in line with their age and development. They skilfully provide support to young people to become increasingly independent while maintaining a family feel to the home.

Transitions into and out of the home are extremely well planned. For young people whose placements are coming to an end, staff make every effort to make the ending a positive one. Young people moving into the home are very carefully matched to the young people already resident; they are involved in welcoming new residents and are asked their views about anyone new arriving at the home. Introductions are paced to meet the individual needs of the young person and every effort is made for young people to meet as many staff as possible before their move. Staff meet family members and current carers to ensure that the transition goes as smoothly as possible. As one fostering manager said, 'This is partnership working at its best.' One social worker commented, 'The home went over and above to start the placement positively. They are so good at what they do, especially forming relationships... They did everything they could to say "we cannot wait to have you here".' This provided the young person with a highly positive start to her placement, which increases the likelihood of placement success.

Staff ensure that young people benefit from a wide range of social, educational and recreational activities. Each young person is encouraged and supported to pursue their own interests. All have opportunities to participate in community clubs and groups, such as youth clubs, that provide opportunities for widening their social network.

Young people know how to complain and feel that they will be listened to if they do complain. Two complaints have been made since the last inspection, one by a young person and the other by a parent. These have both been resolved satisfactorily and the outcome appropriately recorded.

Staff promote contact for young people so that they can stay in touch with the people who are important to them. They work positively and sensitively with families, recognising the importance of young people having meaningful contact with their families. The staff travel long distances to ensure that contact is well supported and takes place in line with individual care plans. One parent stated, 'It puts my mind at ease knowing she is safe and getting good support.' When contact is having a negative impact on young people's emotions and behaviour, staff recognise this and advocate for changes so that contact arrangements are more in line with young people's needs.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Safeguarding is the highest priority for all staff working at the home, is central to their practice and is routinely on the agenda in team meetings and in supervision. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting young people. Managers and staff maintain highly effective relationships with the local police, social workers, schools and health professionals. This well-established professional network means that young people receive high levels of support, reflecting their needs and vulnerabilities.

Staff carry out meaningful and creative work with young people, individually and in groups. They readily talk to young people about relevant issues and young people engage well. As a result, young people understand more about issues such as drug and alcohol misuse, e-safety, extremism, and grooming and child sexual exploitation. Young people are given clear and straightforward advice about what to do if they are worried or scared, and how and who to ask for help. A number of staff have completed training with specialist services in order to knowledgeably raise awareness about child sexual exploitation within their team, as well as being able to deliver bespoke training to young people. As a result, young people are more aware of the risks that they may encounter, build their personal resilience and are better informed about what they can do to keep themselves safe.

Each young person has a comprehensive risk assessment that identifies all of the risks to their safety. Through careful planning, staff are aware of the steps to take in the event of young people exhibiting any high-risk behaviour. Staff know young people extremely well and are able to de-escalate and prevent incidents effectively. The home uses an approach based on recognised theoretical models to help young people process their feelings, reflect on their behaviour and take responsibility for their actions.

Staff understand each young person's individual triggers and behaviours very well. As a result, they are alert to any signs that a young person may need some additional support before their behaviour escalates and they de-escalate challenging situations effectively. Consequently, physical interventions and sanctions are rarely required. There has been one incident of physical intervention in this inspection period. Physical intervention records contain a good level of detail, and staff support young people to reflect on the incident so that they can learn from it. Likewise, staff reflect on each incident to gauge whether anything could have prevented the situation from escalating.

One young person has experienced some very significant challenges. This resulted in an increase in her risk-taking behaviours and, ultimately, to her placement ending. Staff

were alert to the increased level of risk her behaviour was placing her at and did everything that they possibly could to support the young person and maintain her placement. When it became clear that her risks could not be managed safely, the staff worked very hard to make her placement ending both safe and positive for her. Her social worker wrote, ' [Name of young person] had so many opportunities to progress in placement and staff were very supportive.'

The frequency of young people going missing reduces after they come to live in this home. Missing from home episodes have significantly reduced from young people's starting points. Effective strategies are agreed with placing authorities, families and the police to ensure that all parties make coordinated efforts to locate young people. Staff follow their organisational policies and procedures when young people go missing and independent return interviews are appropriately carried out. Young people have individualised missing from home plans that identify triggers, associates and likely places they may go missing from the home.

Staff ensure that boundaries for young people are consistently applied by routine and effective communication with each other alongside adherence to young people's plans and routines. Young people report that the rules and boundaries are fair. They are involved in setting their own incentive targets and understand how to achieve these targets, as well as what the reward will be.

Young people feel confident to raise concerns if they feel they are being bullied. Staff address this through direct work with all young people and discussion in team meetings. Steps are put in place to minimise the negative impact one young person may have on others. On one occasion, when this had been raised by young people as an issue, they were listened to and effective actions were implemented.

Managers ensure that they follow safer recruitment and selection processes. This prevents unsuitable people from having access to vulnerable young people. Thorough induction programmes ensure that staff are equipped to care safely for young people. One staff member said, 'I was really pleased with the induction process. I had the opportunity to shadow staff and look at procedures and policies before working on my own. The managers have continued to check I am OK and are quick to answer any questions, while continuing to be supportive. I really love working here.'

Young people benefit from living in a home that is safe and secure. Regular health and safety checks ensure that the equipment works well and that fire drills are undertaken. There is a detailed location risk assessment that highlights risk factors in the surrounding area and indicates how these will be managed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is highly experienced, suitably qualified and demonstrates a very high level of commitment to her role. Her aspirations for young people are high, as are her expectations of her staff. She leads by example, regularly working alongside staff to oversee the care staff and young people and also to model good practice. An equally committed house manager, who is currently undertaking her level 5 leadership award, provides useful and valued support to the manager.

The home has a stable, committed and well-qualified staff team that delivers consistently high-quality care to young people. Staff report that the manager is an excellent leader, that they are supervised regularly and feel very well supported. Managers are visible in the home and always available to offer advice and support. The staff team's morale is high and its members enjoy working in the home and spending time with young people. Staff benefit from an extensive training programme that is tailored to the individual needs of the young people at the home.

Care planning is excellent. Leaders routinely monitor and evaluate the progress that young people make. The manager demonstrates a keen ability to advocate strongly for the young people in her care and works in a highly collaborative manner with other agencies. When the progress of young people is hindered, there is clear evidence of the manager constructively challenging other services to review young people's care plans and provide them with a higher level of support. As a result, most young people have made outstanding progress from their starting points. Placing authorities have provided extremely positive feedback about this service. One social worker provided glowing feedback, and said, 'This is the best placement I have worked with. They have achieved incredible progress for [name of young person].'

Leaders are acutely aware of the strengths and developmental areas in the home. The manager cites the experience and commitment of the staff team as being the greatest strength of the service. Her areas of focus for improvement are all exceptionally child-centred and aim to secure the best possible outcomes for the children in her care. Record-keeping practices are exemplary. The setting is achieving and exceeding the aims and objectives as defined within the statement of purpose for the home.

Strong, effective leadership and clear monitoring systems are in place to continually review the quality of care provided for young people and improve their outcomes. The manager uses the independent visitor's reports effectively to continuously improve practice and identify areas for development. The manager's own monitoring activity is thorough. Monitoring takes place on a weekly and monthly basis, and the manager compiles evaluative six-monthly reports. The manager seeks feedback from young people and external agencies to improve the service. There is clear evidence that managers learn from incidents, such as serious events, placement successes and placement endings, to make improvements to the care provided to young people.

A particular strength of the home is its commitment to multi-agency working. The partner agencies spoken to during this inspection were unanimous in their praise for the home, and records examined evidenced strong multi-agency working and very regular, detailed communication about each young person.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1234430

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Positive Pathways Limited

Registered provider address: 1556 Stratford Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 9HA

Responsible individual: Danielle Epps

Registered manager: Danielle Epps

Inspector

Anne Daly, social care inspector

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