

1241970

Registered provider: Sandcastle Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home may provide care and accommodation for single gender occupancy only.

Inspection dates: 25 to 26 July 2017

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: not applicable. The home was registered in January 2017. This is therefore its first inspection.

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Most young people make good, and in some areas exceptional, progress from their starting points in the home. This can be attributed to highly positive relationships between young people and staff.
- Managers and staff are committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for young people. They have high aspirations and offer consistent support and encouragement to young people to help them achieve their goals.
- Young people have access to, and meaningfully engage in, therapeutic work delivered by the company's psychotherapist. Additionally the psychotherapist assists staff to underpin their work with young people with a therapeutic approach.
- Young people's health improves due to a determined and consistent effort to help them keep active and make healthy meal choices. Staff have good understanding of young people's emotional health, and employ strategies to help them cope with difficult emotions.
- Contact with young people's families is promoted and families are welcomed into the home. Staff facilitate enjoyable activities for families to participate in so that contact is enjoyable.
- Staff have good understanding of young people's risks. Risks are actively addressed through support, supervision and education. Key-worker sessions contain detailed discussion of risks and help to provide young people with strategies to reduce risk.
- The home adopts a multi-agency approach to meeting young people's needs. There is ample evidence of engagement with external agencies. Where necessary, the home makes challenges on behalf of young people when other agencies are not offering the required level of support.
- Strong leadership is evident, not only from the registered manager but also from the wider organisation, which shows commitment to ensuring that good quality care is delivered to each young person and that individual needs are met.
- Staff benefit from detailed induction, good support from managers and an extensive and bespoke training package to assist them in delivering high quality care.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Since the home opened in January 2017, there has been a high turnover of staff. This has had some impact on the consistency of care afforded to young people in the home.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Most young people make excellent progress in this home from their point of placement. They develop strong relationships with staff, who they believe genuinely care about them. Relationships are close and meaningful to young people, with staff able to understand how young people are feeling through their presentation and non-verbal cues.

When young people are not making good progress, this is well understood by staff who act as advocates for them. One young person was clear from the point of placement that she did not want to live in the home and would work to break the placement down. Staff had understanding and insight into her behaviour, and made efforts to support her to make a positive transition while also clearly communicating her views to her placing authority.

Young people who have difficulty attending education when they arrive are supported to improve their attendance and, in one case, attendance massively improved despite lengthy travel time to and from school. The home advocates well on behalf of young people who are not in a suitable education provision to ensure this is addressed and changed. Young people have personal education plans as a result of persistent challenges to placing authorities who have not provided these.

The home is committed to ensuring that young people's views are listened to. There are a variety of ways that young people's views are gathered, but more significantly they feel able to express themselves on a daily basis and feel confident that staff will listen to them and take action to address issues they raise.

Healthy eating and activities are actively promoted to help young people achieve a healthy life style and healthy body weight. Young people are supported to develop healthy menus for the week, and meal times at the dining table have a 'family feel' to them. The home manages complex medical conditions well and ensures young people receive appropriate support. One social worker spoke in highly positive terms about all aspects of care but particularly commented on the home's ability to meet young people's health needs: 'the home has worked so hard to meet her health needs – they were in a mess when she arrived into placement and they have got everything sorted for her now'. Some young people have been helped to reduce their smoking habit considerably.

Young people are able to meet with the company psychotherapist on a weekly basis and this is proving to be very successful for two young people who have engaged particularly well. Some young people are improving their understanding of emotions and their ability to identify what they are feeling, which is significant progress from their point of placement. The psychotherapist also supports staff in developing their care to better understand young people's emotions and behaviour.

Young people engage in a variety of leisure activities which are tailored to their specific

interests. They are frequently taken on walks and swimming to improve their health and fitness, but also have treats such as going to a local seaside resort to access fairground rides and to Laser Quest. Young people are keen to go on holiday abroad in summer and staff are facilitating this with enthusiasm.

The home promotes young people's life skills through supporting them to be involved and take some responsibility for day-to-day activities such as laundry and meal planning and preparation. One young person has expressed an interest in growing fruit and vegetables, and this is developed through the provision of raised beds which the young person has responsibility for tending to.

Staff do a great deal of direct work with young people, including detailed and in depth key-worker sessions which address issues that are current and have an impact on young people, for example helping young people understand care proceedings. The home also promoted better understanding in this area by arranging for a judge to visit a young person in the home, which enabled her to participate in a meaningful way in her care plan.

A particular strength of the home is in promoting family contact. Families are welcomed in to the home and speak very positively about their children's care. The home has developed highly positive relationships with families who have previously had negative relationships with placements. One parent commented, 'They are fantastic, that's all I can say really. It is the best thing that has happened to (name). She is happy here and she has made progress 1000 percent.'

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

Risks to young people are well understood and are considered from the pre-placement stage within the home's matching documents. Detailed risk assessments enable the reader to understand fully the breadth and depth of young people's specific risks. Progression for most young people includes significant reduction in their risk-taking behaviours. Where young people's risks are not reducing, the home takes action to remedy this, for example by requesting placement disruption meetings.

Self-harm is a high risk for young people in this home. Staff have had specific training to address self-harm linked to a young person's diagnosed medical condition, which enables them to better understand the young person's self-harming behaviour. Although there have been incidents when a young person has been admitted to hospital because of self-harming behaviour and needed a hospital setting to feel safe, these incidents are far fewer than before her placement commenced. Staff are highly vigilant about young people's presentation and mood and have good understanding of the situations in which young people are more likely to self-harm. Staff seek support as appropriate from external agencies to manage the self-harming behaviours of young people. Staff are vigilant in checking on the welfare of young people regularly when their mood is thought to be low. Young people are able to understand more and express their feelings more through the provision of psychotherapeutic support, which enables young people to better understand when they need to ask for help.

Missing from home was a significant issue for some young people prior to placement at this home. One young person who was assessed as high risk in this area has not been missing at all since her placement commenced at the home over six months ago. Missing from home episodes are rare, and the home provides a robust, multi-agency response to any missing incidents. Staff actively look for young people who are missing from home as well as liaising with the police, parents and local authorities. As a result, missing from home incidents are short-lived.

There is a strong emphasis on ensuring that young people are using the internet safely and have a good understanding of child sexual exploitation (CSE). All young people placed at the home are at risk of CSE. Educating young people about risk is a strength of this home. One young person has her own CSE file in which she completes work around this issue in order to develop her understanding and reduce her vulnerability. This file includes work around short films developed by the police, 'thinkuknow' work on child exploitation, online protection material and online training courses. Staff and young people have developed agreements around the amount of time young people can spend on social networking sites. Staff have young people's passwords and make regular checks on their internet activity, and some young people are supervised when using the internet. This ensures the safety of young people and improves their understanding of risk.

Staff rarely resort to restrictive physical intervention in order to manage young people's behaviour. Sanctions and rewards are used effectively, and young people have individual targets to work towards which motivates them to maintain positive behaviour. All staff are trained in the management of actual or potential aggression (MAPA), before they commence working with young people. Refresher training has also been provided, following an incident where a young person was unhappy following a physical intervention at the home.

The company uses safer recruitment procedures, which the manager was familiar with. This ensures that staff who are employed are suitable to work with vulnerable young people and do not pose any risk.

The home provides a safe environment for young people to live in and has a detailed location risk assessment which evidences consultation with a wide variety of external agencies to assess local risks.

Bullying is rare within the home. Staff are alert to managing relationships between the residents of the home, particularly when one young person found maintaining positive relationships challenging. Bullying is considered within young people's placement plans and young people have participated in an online bullying course. The home uses anti-bullying support and intervention plans and has a resolution form for any incidents of bullying. Young people do not always have positive relationships with each other. Although staff have the necessary skills to manage any friction between young people, one young person placed did have a negative impact on the others.

Young people currently placed are not specifically at risk of radicalisation or extremism. All staff have completed Channel training – which is part of the Home Office counter terrorism 'Prevent' strategy, a multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism – so that any risks could be identified and acted upon.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by a strong manager who has the relevant qualification. Although new to the role, she has come to the home well prepared to be effective and lead a staff team with passion and commitment. The wider management structure of the company has provided her with good support and a positive ethos to develop the service and meet the needs of individual young people placed in the home.

Retention of staff has been problematic in the initial stages of the home's operation. The manager now feels she has a good staff team in place. Staff have a good balance of experience and skill, and positively promote the aims, objectives and ethos of the home. The changes in staffing have had some impact on young people, and they report that they miss some staff whom they had developed positive relationships with.

Staff report that they are well supported through a thorough induction, an extensive training package (including commissioned training around the young people's specific needs) and supervision. Appraisals have not yet taken place, due to the service having only been open for seven months, but are planned for later in the year.

Managers have a detailed understanding of the progress young people make and take effective action when a young person is not in their preferred placement. Staff are strong advocates for young people and ensure that their views are communicated to their placing authorities, making challenges about the lack of progression of young people's care plans.

Placement matching activity is thorough, although evidence of analysis is not always well documented. Where placements have not been well matched, this has been in part due to a lack of pre-placement information provided by the placing authority. Managers are alert to this and they make every effort to ensure that they have extensive and complete information prior to any placements being offered. Where placements have broken down, managers have reflected on the reasons for this and used the experience to learn and move forward in their planning for future admissions.

All aspects of young people's care is driven by a multi-agency approach and there is more than sufficient evidence to show positive working relationships with a range of agencies to ensure young people's needs are fully met in all areas.

Young people's views are taken into account and are used to develop the care afforded to them. For example, young people are encouraged to complete staff appraisal forms so that feedback can be given constructively to staff. Young people also complete questionnaires to help managers understand their needs and improve their care. Likewise external agencies and parents are asked to give feedback via questionnaires in order to inform service development and improvement.

The manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. She recognises that, as a new team, further development is required to improve knowledge and team working, although she also reports that the foundations for this are firmly in place.

Internal and external monitoring systems are in place and are working effectively. The independent visits and reports are useful in identifying any strengths and areas for

improvement. The manager notes that the visitor has significant experience in this area and uses this to inform her recommendations. The manager undertakes all the weekly and monthly monitoring tasks, including seeking feedback, in order to ensure that the service is achieving its aims and objectives as set out in its statement of purpose.

Managers actively promote tolerance, equality and diversity in all aspect of the home's delivery of care. Young people's cultural needs are taken into account in placement plans. Training covers equality and diversity issues, and the care provided at the home is delivered with the fundamental ethos of unconditional positive regard, congruence and empathy, which ensures that young people and staff feel accepted whatever their equality and diversity needs are.

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 difference 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. Whenever 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 and 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: 1241970

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Sandcastle Care Ltd

Registered provider address: 49 Whitegate Drive, Blackpool, Lancashire FY3 9DG

Responsible individual: Julie McShane

Registered manager: Denise Hyland

Inspector

Charlie Bamber, social care inspector

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