

1251364

Registered provider: Area Camden Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home, registered to care for up to six young people irrespective of gender who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 10 to 11 October 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: This is the 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:

- The home has been operational since July 2017. Despite this brief period of time, young people settle well and make good progress.
- The home benefits from a permanent management team whose members have

moved from senior positions in the other home operated by the organisation. This brings consistency and a high level of experience.

- Managers have assembled a committed and dedicated staff team who report good morale in the home.
- Young people engage well in education and improve their attendance, when previously they had struggled prior to arrival in the home.
- Young people reduce risk-taking behaviour, such as running away from the home and engaging in criminality.
- Managers benefit from excellent support from senior managers within the organisation. This allows them to focus on the care offered to young people.
- Managers have implemented a staggered programme of admissions since the opening of the home. This has allowed young people to settle quickly.

The children's home's areas for development:

- This inspection notes one minor shortfall in relation to behavioural management: one care plan does not offer sufficient guidance for staff on the management of risk.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- When there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day to day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 9.5, page 41)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home was registered in May 2017. Young people were first admitted to the home in July 2017. The gap between registration and accommodating young people led to a prolonged period of planning, which has benefited young people. The home is a newly decorated, spacious environment. Young people report that they receive a warm and pleasant welcome from staff and enjoy a range of home comforts, including a first experience of heated bathroom floors. Young people respond well to the environment and are proud of their home. Young people speak of the home and staff team with fondness and affection; one young person said, 'When I get angry, I look around this place and see the staff and I think everything is OK.'

Young people are able to access a broad range of activities including kick boxing, martial arts and a driver's course provided under instruction. Young people report that martial arts assist them in managing their emotions and gaining regular exercise. These activities are supported by a good use of weekly planners. Photographs of significant events are uploaded to individual social media platforms to provide a permanent memento of young people's progress and achievements.

Staff have formed close and trusting relationships with young people within a short space of time. These are based on regular and effective key-work sessions and engagement. Young people actively seek out staff for social interaction, for example hair braiding before the school day begins. They speak with fondness of enjoying 'banging' home-cooked food enjoyed in a family-style environment. Young people report that staff keep promises and remain committed. One young person recalled how the registered manager waited until the early hours of the morning to greet him on arrival in the home, following through with a prior commitment to do so.

Young people progress well in education. The registered manager is a qualified teacher and enjoys a deep knowledge of local education resources and positive relationships with education professionals at the host local authority. Despite difficult histories of non-attendance and poor behaviours, young people value education and the structure and sense of achievement that it offers. School uniform is purchased upon arrival and a firm expectation of school compliance is established. Staff engage with schools to arrange

reduced timetables for young people and monitor and support them thereafter. These interventions are successful and have recently seen the doubling of the attendance rate for one young person and another young person progressing from non-attendance to 95%.

Good relationships between staff and young people support good behavioural management. Boundaries are clear and enforced consistently by staff with humour as a good source of distraction. There is no use of restraint. Young people respond well to a behavioural management system that incentivises school attendance and positive behaviours on a daily basis. Staff act quickly to challenge behaviours in an open and constructive manner. One young person commented, 'When I mess up we talk about it and then it's forgotten.' When damage to the home occurs, young people are encouraged to 'make good' by helping with subsequent repairs. This offers young people a useful means of learning independent living skills and enables them to reflect on the impact of their poor behaviours.

Feedback from parents supports this. One parent commented, 'He [son] is so much better; he has settled and is no longer missing all the time. It is a big change – I am very happy.' Parents report a regular exchange of information from staff members. Contact is managed well, both inside and outside of the home. Feedback from placing social workers is equally positive. One commented, 'The staff are open and try to be as supportive as possible.'

Young people feel involved and heard in the running of the home. Residents' meetings are a regular forum for planning activities and suggestions for the weekly menu. Independent advocacy is routinely offered and the complaints procedure is known and understood by young people. Care plans accurately record the wishes and feelings of young people. Where appropriate, staff support young people to read through their own case documentation. This allows young people to increase their understanding of their difficult histories.

Young people swiftly access primary care services, such as general practitioners, on arrival. Where engagement proves difficult, staff arrange for statutory health checks to be conducted within the home. This allows for the meeting to be conducted in the comfort of the home and in familiar surroundings. Where engagement with specialist services such as child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) provision is refused, staff speak with the relevant professionals. This means that staff seek expert advice when required and incorporate any recommendations into the young people's behavioural management plans.

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

All of the young people in the home informed the inspector that they feel safe and well cared for in the home. Young people view their home as a place of safety. They have formed good relationships with staff in a short space of time and are mutually supportive of each other. They share their experiences openly and encourage respect for the staff team.

Risk assessments are good. Assessments commence upon receipt of referral information. They present a clear idea of the areas of concern regarding young people, such as the influence of social circles or potential use of drugs. Staff read through risk assessments and speak with confidence and authority of the work undertaken by the staff team to minimise and manage risk. Staff understand safeguarding procedures and receive specialist advice and guidance from the host local authority where appropriate. One minor shortfall was identified in relation to the behavioural management plan for one young person. This plan lacks sufficient guidance for staff on risk management.

Young people reduce their risk-taking behaviours, such as running away from the home. This is confirmed by local police. One young person has settled well in the home despite being missing from care for four weeks prior to arrival in the home. Staff are conscious of the 'push and pull factors' and plan activities such as a recent meal in a restaurant at key times of risk, such as weekend evenings. One young person commented, 'I like being here. Staff are cool and they keep me here. I go to them when I feel down.'

There is a good response when young people do go missing. Staff are vigilant and attentive. Case files contain detailed 'grab packs' which assist police in giving key details of known associates and social media activity of each of the young people in the home. Staff record number plates of cars observed to be carrying young people and pass this on to police. Staff proactively seek to introduce themselves to friends and known associates. Staff analyse and evaluate patterns of risk and known information about each period of going missing, such as the names of the friends or associates involved. When it was understood that a young person had been picked up from a known area of London, staff called all of the taxi firms in the area to ascertain the originating address. On return, independent return to care interviews occur regularly and key information shared and incorporated into risk assessments.

Good safeguarding is entrenched in staff practice. On realising one young person was going outside of London during periods of going missing from the home, staff engaged his social network in that area to build relationships and conduct phone welfare checks. These episodes of going missing have ceased and regular phone contact is maintained when the young person concerned is outside of the home.

Staff are proactive and practise with an ability to handle risk effectively. They have introduced themselves to local shopkeepers to inform them of the opening of the home and ensure that the sale of alcohol and cigarettes is stopped to young people. The local police community support officer updates the home on specific risks, such as a recent spate of thefts in the local area.

Staff use their own knowledge and experience to advocate for young people. Recently, this involved supporting a change of legal representation on a criminal matter for one young person. Staff were not confident that the wishes and feelings of the young person were appropriately represented. The young person concerned is now much happier with the replacement service.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home benefits from a committed, dedicated, permanent management team. Managers have been crucial to the planning and opening of the home. The registered manager and her deputy have moved from senior positions at the other residential provision owned by the organisation. They bring a child-centred, compassionate and caring ethos and a high level of experience. This is supported by placing social workers who comment that managers are 'always there' for and 'passionate' on behalf of young people, despite many difficulties and challenges.

Managers have incorporated the themes and recommendations of inspections of the other residential provision to good effect. The registered manager has achieved the required management qualification. She is well supported by a deputy, who expects to complete this qualification by May 2018. Both are well respected by the staff team and young people.

The new staff team has bonded well and morale is strong. It is an ethnically diverse and talented team. A new rota structure has allowed staff to work consistently together and form effective working relationships. One staff member commented, 'I feel like I really belong here; we are all working together.' Managers ensure a rigorous programme of recruitment and induction. This includes three interviews involving a role-play scenario and five shadow shifts in the home to fully assess compatibility and an ability to interact with young people. Probation procedures are effective and managed by good levels of management oversight and support. Well-planned recruitment has resulted in extremely limited use of agency staff and increased consistency for young people.

Managers benefit from excellent support and an exciting service development plan from senior managers within the organisation. Recruitment, quality assurance and training provision are overseen by senior managers. This allows managers in the home to focus on the levels of care offered by staff and the progress of young people. Training is sourced from a bespoke training consultant. They are able to tailor course content to the specific needs of the young people in the home and therefore make training more effective.

Managers are eager to develop relationships with outside agencies and key professionals. The registered manager is joining the board of governors of the main receiving school for young people in the home. This will improve the monitoring of the progress made by young people and further support them in their learning and development.

Managers use their good levels of experience to challenge poor care planning by host local authorities. This ensures that decisions on key issues such as family contact are well assessed and compatible with the needs of young people. Where concerns arise in placements, managers are quick to convene monitoring meetings. This enables them to share concerns with key professionals and attempt to ensure the stability of the placement.

Admissions to the home are well managed. Managers have staggered admissions to the home to allow young people to settle before further arrivals are considered. Where admissions have not worked well, managers are reflective and seek to refine the admissions procedure. Managers contact previous placements, parents, read through information regarding the placing authority and its practice and meet with young people prior to considering an admission. This fully assesses suitability and supports the stability of the home.

Managers have an excellent knowledge of the needs of young people. Case files show regular management audits and the regular review of care plans and risk assessments. Care plans offer realistic, achievable interventions, with an established timetable for review and evaluation. Case chronologies are commonly used to assess patterns of behaviour and provide an overall oversight of progress made by young people.

The home environment is safe and well maintained. An allocated maintenance operative ensures that repairs and damage are quickly made good.

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: 1251364

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Area Camden Limited

Registered provider address: 1 Turnpike Lane, London N8 0EP

Responsible individual: Nuala Harrington

Registered manager: Cara Moore

Inspector

Barnaby Dowell, social care inspector

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