

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	06/12/2016
Unique reference number	SC000820
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Pear Tree Projects Limited
Registered provider address	Peartree House, Bolam, Darlington, County Durham DL2 2UP

Responsible individual	David Bartlett
Registered manager	Sean Cooper
Inspector	Susan Atkinson-Millmoor

Inspection date	06/12/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC000820

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The young people have access to a range of activities that offer new leisure opportunities and, in particular, those associated with horse riding and the care of the animals at the school farm.
- The staff know how to develop and maintain positive, nurturing relationships with young people. This allows the young people to settle well and enables work to begin on past traumas.
- Educational attainment is well supported. This has a positive impact on attendance at the school operated by the provider and at the school in the local area. The relationship between the home and the schools provides a holistic approach to home and education.
- Boundaries are clear and effective, resulting in previous behaviours, such as going missing, either reducing or stopping all together.
- The registered manager and staff team have created good links with statutory agencies. They share information well and review the documentation previously completed, which offers a holistic review of the young person's life and the impact that the placement has had.
- The staff show aspirational thinking in relation to the young people's achievements.
- The young people in the home said that they feel safe because of the way in which the registered manager and the staff team listen to them and support them.
- The house is a homely, welcoming and comfortable environment. The manager and staff team ensure that the home is clean and well maintained.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— (a) a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; (b) an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; (c) there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; (d) a child protection enquiry involving a child— (i) is instigated; or (ii) concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or (e) there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (5) A notification made under this regulation— (a) must include details of— (i) the matter; (ii) the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and (iii) any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter; (b) must be made or confirmed in writing. (Regulation 40(4)(5))	09/12/2016

Recommendations

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

- The home should provide personalised care which meets each child's needs and promotes their welfare, taking into account the child's gender, religion, ethnicity, cultural and linguistic background, sexual identity, mental health, any disability, their assessed needs, previous experiences and any relevant plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.2)
- Staff need the knowledge and skills to recognise and be alert for any signs that might indicate that a child is in any way at risk of harm. The registered person should ensure that skills in safeguarding are gained, refreshed and recorded in the home's workforce plan. This is particularly in relation to training in the needs of children and young people who have been or are at risk of sexual exploitation. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.12)
- Regulations 35–39 detail the records that must be kept in children's homes. All children's case records (regulation 36) must be kept up to date and stored securely while the children remain in the home. Case records must be kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
10/11/2014	Full	Good
20/02/2014	Interim	Good progress

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The home offers the young people a safe place with effective boundaries that allow them to develop and address previous traumas. This enables them to begin to grow in self-esteem and progress in all areas of their lives. The staff know the young people well and provide good support through the development of positive relationships. Such relationships are evident day to day in the proactive engagement of the young people by staff, characterised by warmth and a good sense of humour. This enables the young people to develop a strong sense of being valued and belonging that provides a platform for change. A social worker commented: 'There has been a dramatic change in [Name] since coming to the home.' The large home is well maintained and has ample space for communal and individual activities enjoyed by the young people, such as board games and electronic gaming. It has a welcoming, calm and relaxed atmosphere. The young people are involved in decorating and personalising their bedrooms. This enables a sense of ownership and respect for their surroundings to develop. Plans are reviewed and updated regularly. These are shared with the young people and other professionals, as appropriate. Care plans detail the outcomes to be achieved, but not always the strategies to be used to change or address the behaviour. In addition, such records do not detail all relevant needs to be addressed by the placement, which can limit full progress. Relationships between the registered manager, staff and young people are strong and effective. A member of staff said: 'This is a great organisation to work for.' Staff are aware of the plans for the young people and offer consistent messages of support as well as guidance. This helps the young people to feel cared for, enabling them to make progress across a range of areas, including education, behaviour and emotional well-being. A young person said: 'I really like it here.' Another young person said: 'I am doing really good here.' The young people achieve well at school. They all have 100% levels of attendance. The staff support young people in education through daily transport and support in the classroom. This gives staff a unique perspective on the young people's education and offers a consistent approach to dealing with issues that can arise and impact on the young people once they return to the home. The result is that the young people achieve in both areas. When appropriate, young people are encouraged to return to mainstream school to take up the additional opportunities offered.	

The staff hold a monthly meeting with the young people in which they are able to discuss issues and make contributions. The young people offer feedback to the manager about the staff at the time of their appraisals. This helps the young people to feel listened to and further develops their sense of belonging. The young people were observed chatting happily about their day with each other and staff over board games at the end of the school day. The result is that a 'family' atmosphere is developed.

Good health is promoted in the home. When issues arise, staff advocate well on behalf of the young people to ensure that they receive services that enable them to achieve good physical and mental health.

A range of activities, such as cinema, ice skating, horse riding and animal care, is planned with input from the young people. The ability just to relax at home is also encouraged and the young people identify which nights they will be 'just chilling out'. There is a wide range of resources, such as books, arts and crafts and board games, available in the home for such times.

Achievements are recognised and celebrated individually as well as events such as the Christmas ball, held annually by the provider group that the home and school belongs to. This enables a sense of community and belonging that extends beyond the home itself. This allows the young people to develop a sense of security and an appreciation of what the home can offer them.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The young people feel and are safe and secure in the home. Staffing levels allow for individual work to be undertaken with the young people and effective management of the group to take place. The new system in place to identify risks and offer subsequent strategies to reduce or mitigate them is now embedded. Risk assessment documentation is up to date. It is easy to understand and identifies levels of risk, along with a month-by-month breakdown to assess progress made against strategies outlined. However, risk assessments do not always take account of previous information made available prior to the placement. This may increase those risks to the young people, in particular at the start of placements. There have been no incidents of sexual exploitation at the home, but such potential risks remain high for some of the young people. Staff are aware of these risks and	

discuss them with young people in an age-appropriate manner. However, there has been a series of incidents and allegations in the home between the young people. These have all been dealt with appropriately by the manager and staff, but this has led to some of the young people moving on from the home earlier than anticipated. One such incident should have been notified to the regulator and was not. It was reported to the local authority, but a lack of notification means that the regulator cannot ensure that all relevant steps are taken to safeguard young people.

Overall, episodes of missing reduce significantly when young people join the home. The clear boundaries in place offer the young people the security that they need to deal with issues that are concerning them with the staff, thereby reducing the need to go missing. When the young people do absent themselves from the home, it is for a limited time, and they often return of their own volition.

Physical interventions are rarely used, but staff are adequately trained to use them if required. Records show that appropriate management oversight assesses the appropriateness of the use of such interventions. This ensures that practice remains within safe boundaries.

The use of sanctions for unacceptable behaviour is minimal. When sanctions are used, it is, on occasion, difficult to see why the sanction has been applied as the language in the recording of the sanction is generalised and in the form of a descriptive statement. In addition, recordings are often tinged with judgemental language rather than clear expectations. This needs to be addressed because it leads to a lack of clarity, which would be unhelpful to a young person reading the records now or in the future.

The home operates a daily logbook, detailing the day-to-day activity of the home. However, individual entries in this log are not signed at each entry, and this needs to be addressed to ensure accountability of recorded events.

The telephone arrangements in the home have now been addressed, and confidentiality is maintained via a separate phone line for the young people. In addition, the minor shortfalls in safeguarding previously identified have now been addressed.

Generic health and safety are taken seriously at the home. Risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly. Fire drills are carried out, as required, and the young people respond rapidly and appropriately. All equipment in the home is maintained and tested within required timescales. This ensures the safety of the young people.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager has been in post for 10 years and is appropriately qualified for the role. The deputy manager has only been in post for three weeks. This management team is in its infancy and therefore difficult to assess in terms of impact at this time. The registered manager is passionate about the care offered to the young people and keeps their needs at the forefront of practice in the home. He ensures that this is consistent among the team members, by working late one evening per week, to take the opportunity to talk to the young people and to observe practice. This, combined with the young people's meetings, which are held monthly, ensures that he enables the young people to feel listened to about aspects of their care. A young person said: 'The manager makes it a good home.' Another young person said: '[Name of manager] is a legend.' The staff receive good levels of support. They have an annual appraisal of their performance and one-to-one supervision once a month from their line manager. Staff spoken to during the inspection confirmed that this gives them the opportunity to reflect on practice and to discuss any concerns. However, records of supervisions are brief and do not evidence fully the areas discussed. This leaves a shortfall if any aspect of practice in the home were to be challenged. Recruitment processes are robust, and complete records of checks are kept to maintain the safety of the young people. While it is accepted that there are no stated timescales for renewal of all staff training courses, regular updates are essential to develop practice. Some staff have not received training for over three years in monitoring and managing the behaviours of those young people who have been or are at risk of being sexually exploited. As there are young people resident who have this identified risk, such training needs to be in place and to include current and up-to-date practice guidance. The registered manager monitors the running of the home on an ongoing basis. The six-monthly reports relating to the quality of practice and impact of the home now include the views of the young people, their families (where appropriate) and other professionals. This supports the manager's evaluation in the report. The registered manager and staff have effective working relationships with external agencies, including those who provide specialist expertise. Targeted support to overcome trauma and abuse or to address concerns about behaviour is offered to the young people and supported by the staff team. A family member stated: 'They do a fantastic job. I wish we had found them years ago.' When conducting the annual review of the location of the children's home, the registered manager now seeks feedback from a wide range of agencies. This was	

not drawn together into a risk management plan, but this was addressed during the inspection.

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 children looked after 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 that 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 that 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 whom 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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