

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	10/03/2016
Unique reference number	SC000820
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Pear Tree Projects Limited
Registered person address	Peartree House, Bolam, DARLINGTON, County Durham, DL2 2UP

Responsible individual	David Bartlett
Registered manager	Sean Cooper
Inspector	Steve Pearson

Inspection date	09/03/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
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 last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has sustained effectiveness.	
The previous inspection was recent, being only six weeks ago. Since then outcomes for young people have been mixed. As one member of staff said, 'We've had a topsy-turvy time.' The placements of two young people have ended prematurely because of concerning behaviour and associated serious allegations. The police are investigating whether any offences have been committed. The abrupt ending of the placements has not been catastrophic because moves within the near to medium term were already being planned. Both young people are succeeding in their new placements, one of which remains with the group of homes run by the registered provider. As a result of the incidents, outcomes for other young people who remain at the home have also been significant. For all young people, educational progress has remained positive and all young people have a 100% attendance record. Where new admissions have taken place, while not ideal, these have been carried out in the best way possible given the difficult circumstances prevailing at the time. There have been two significant incidents since the previous inspection and the registered persons have responded to them appropriately. The registered manager has advocated to uphold the welfare and promote the best outcomes for the young people involved. The registered manager and staff seek to keep young people safe and policies and procedures are followed to this end. Where they conclude they cannot keep young people safe, the registered manager discusses this formally with the placing authority. If necessary, the placement of any young person is ended by giving 28 days' notice. This time period is made clear to the young person to give them the opportunity to behave better thereby enabling them to remain at the home. The registered manager works with a variety of professional agencies to support best outcomes for young people. Such agencies include the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, the police, placing authorities and independent review officers.	

At the previous inspection, Ofsted made one requirement and four recommendations. Some of these have been met and so the quality of care has improved. The manager's monitoring of care quality is more complete because he now incorporates the views of staff into the evaluation reports. He now also contacts the range of agencies suggested by government guidance, to seek their opinions about whether there are any risks associated with the location of the children's home. Safety has also improved as a result of recruitment procedures that are now carried out in accordance with legal requirements.

Three recommendations made at the previous inspection six weeks ago are not yet completed and so have been repeated at this inspection. Information about young people is not fully confidential as young people can pick up a phone elsewhere in the lounge or hall and listen in. The registered manager has ordered a new telephone line dedicated for young people but this has not been installed yet. Risk assessments are still not adequately robust. Some are still insufficiently clear about what the staff must do to reduce risks, in particular those given a high risk rating. The registered manager's monitoring reports do not yet reflect government guidance, although a draft version has been created.

The overall arrangements for monitoring the quality of care are sound. An independent person makes unannounced visits once a month to talk to young people, parents and staff about the quality of care and to assess the home's documentation. They make recommendations where necessary and check on these at the next visit. The registered manager also assesses and reports on the quality of care once a month. These arrangements provide a good basis for identification of any shortfalls and taking actions to put them right.

Information about this children's home

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

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/01/2016	Full	Good
24/02/2015	Interim	Sustained Effectiveness
10/11/2014	Full	Good
20/02/2014	Interim	Good Progress

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

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that the quality of care reviews conducted by the manager every 6 months are underpinned by the Quality Standards as described in regulations 5 to 14. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 65 paragraph 15.2)
- Ensure the handling of information about young people promotes confidentiality and security. In particular this means ensuring unauthorised people cannot listen to staff telephone conversations by picking up another phone in the house. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 62 paragraph 14.3)
- Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, record in their risk assessment details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day to day basis. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 42 paragraph 9.5)

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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