

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC000820
Inspector	Michele Hargan
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Pear Tree Projects Limited
Registered person address	Toy Top Farm Houghton Bank, Heighington Darlington County Durham DL2 2UQ
Responsible individual	David Anthony John Bartlett
Registered manager	Sean Thomas Cooper
Date of last inspection	20/02/2014

Inspection date	10/11/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	None taken

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Staff work effectively to promote outstanding outcomes for young people. Young people's education, emotional wellbeing and physical health are greatly improved whilst living in the home taking into account where young people started from. Young people enjoy going to school and their attendance is excellent. Young people receive a quality of care that is good. Young people and staff enjoy good relationships and young people rate the home highly, staff are good at ensuring young people are safe and young people say they feel safe. Sanction records are not maintained as required by legislation, so the effectiveness of any measures cannot be demonstrated. Young people are restrained only as a last resort to keep them safe. However staff need to review these records regularly and identify any patterns to consider alternative responses to young people in distress. There is one requirement and one recommendation made within this area.

The Registered Manager needs to undertake additional training to keep up to date with developments in practice for the benefit of staff and ultimately young people. Registered Managers reports required by legislation show a good level of consultation with children, parents and social workers. The do not however sufficiently demonstrate how quality of care for young people is improved. Regulation 33 reports are not to the required standard and this has been brought to the attention of the registered provider. There is one requirement and one

recommendation made within this area.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home accommodates up to five young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/02/2014	Interim	good progress
05/11/2013	Full	good
14/01/2013	Interim	good progress
17/07/2012	Full	good

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
9 (2001)	ensure the registered manager shall undertake from time to time such training as is appropriate to ensure that he has the experience and skills necessary for managing the children's home. In particular the completion of attachment training and relevant training in managing behaviour which may pose a risk of significant harm to other children (Regulation 9 (3))	30/06/2015
17B (2001)	ensure that any measure of discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the name of the person using the measure, and any	30/11/2014

	other person present; the effectiveness and consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 17B (3) (b) (e) (f))	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure each home regularly review incidents of challenging behaviour, examines trends or issues emerging from this, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice. In particular to identify triggers for young people who have been involved in more than one restraint. Also to consider alternative responses to behaviour which precedes restraint including increasing levels of direct support for young people from staff (NMS 3.21)
- ensure avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting. Risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel. In particular young people are not required to sign for receipt of their pocket money, valuables, young people meetings or reports (NMS 10.3)
- ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home. In particular reports relating to review of the quality of care clearly demonstrates what has taken place to improve the quality of care available to children. (NMS 21.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people's social skills and abilities to make meaningful relationships improve because of the support staff provide. Staff work with young people to develop their interests and potential.. 'We try and look at what they are already good at,' staff said. This approach helps to increases young people's self-esteem and confidence.

Young people's physical and emotional health is improved because of the care and support they receive within the home. Young people receive excellent support from staff helping promoting their continued involvement with services that meet their emotional health. Care staff reported that one young person is ' more reflective than when he first came'. Young people also receive very good support from staff helping them manage their medication in preparation for independent living. The level of support young people receive increases the likelihood of improved health in adulthood.

Young people's educational and vocational attainment improves taking into account where they started from. Young people all go to a school which is part of the service the home provide, and the school is rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted. It is situated on a separate site and they are taken there by support staff who then stay with them to offer additional support. Young people said, 'I love school.' And 'I've got better at school.' Young people's attendance at school is excellent their enthusiasm and interest in further learning increases as a result.

Young people's views are important to those who care for them. They are asked for feedback by the Registered Manager as part of the staff appraisal process. Staff bring young people and their carers together from the registered providers other homes, for sporting activities and fund raising events. A young person said, 'I like to play football.' Young people also take part in local leisure clubs. 'He does running club two nights, strength training one night, he loves it,' staff said. This means young people learn how to participate and contribute within the immediate and wider community.

Young people have contact with their families where this is in their best interests, and staff provide very good support and oversight to support contact. Contact arrangements are clearly outlined in both the homes care plan, and the young people's 'child friendly' version of the plan. Young people experience an approach to contact that promotes understanding of their background and histories. This also helps promote a sense of identity for young people.

Young people receive excellent support with helping them prepare for independence. Staff said about a young person's developing skills, 'he is good at managing money and at going shopping.' The home facilities include an adjoining flat suitably furnished enabling young people an experience of independence with oversight from

staff. Young people feel more confident about looking after themselves because they learn the necessary skills.

Quality of care

good

Care staff relate well to young people and young people speak well of their carer's. A young person said, 'I trust her we have a key worker session every month she helps me.' Young people's meetings take place regularly during which they are asked about likes, dislikes and what types of activities they prefer to take part in. Another young person said, 'we have young people's meetings every three weeks we debate things we can say what we don't like.' Young people learn that their views are listened to and taken seriously, increasing levels of trust between young people and staff.

Young people know how to raise a complaint and staff respond appropriately to any concerns. 'I put it down in writing, my social worker told me to, and they sorted it out,' a young person said. Young people receive a guide detailing all aspects of the home as part of the admission process. This guidance makes clear what staff expect of young people and what they can expect from staff. Staff help build young people's confidence about expressing any concerns as they see staff take effective action.

Care staff increase young people's understanding of their individual needs by involving each of them in the creation of a child friendly version of their care plan. A young person said, 'I get to see my care plans whenever I want.' Staff make good use of this opportunity to focus on young people's achievements. Young people are effectively engaged by staff who help them understand the choices they have and the progress they are making.

Care staff help young people with managing their allowances. They receive their pocket money every week and their clothing allowance is paid into a bank account that they can access as and when they want. 'I am allowed to choose what I like and I bought a jacket on Saturday and I chose it. Sometimes I get my key worker to get my clothes,' a young person said. Young people are asked to sign records showing receipt of these allowances and to indicate participation in other aspects of their care. This is not a required practice and does not fit with living in a domestic setting.

Care staff help young people learn more about their cultural heritage and further their understanding of the region from which they originate. Young people have taken part in trips at home and abroad, raising their awareness of British history in the centenary year of the first world war. 'Every morning we get a local paper the kids love it, I ask them to read the headlines and we talk about what's going on'. This approach helps young people develop their cultural and individual identities.

Staff are effective at enabling young people to take up services that help improve their emotional and physical wellbeing. Staff follow through recommendations from health professionals involved with young people to ensure their health needs are met. Young people take part in a wide range of physical activities and pastimes that also benefit them physically and emotionally. A young person said, 'I couldn't run before and I had to run after a kite I ran there and I ran back and staff said I didn't know you could run that fast'. 'They get a lot of exercise young people have been walking today because it was outdoor education,' staff said. Young people's confidence improves because they feel physically well.

Staff provide young people with support and structure ensuring their full participation in school life. Staff said young people have, 'exceptional attendance they are there every day, we take them, they know it is part of their everyday routine they get up, get their bag sorted and they go.' Young people learn to how to take part in group activities and this helps reduce anxious feelings about school.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people are safe because of the support and oversight they receive from care staff. Young people are confident about raising any concerns. They said, 'if I'm unhappy, I would go to a member of staff.' And 'staff keep me safe, they help me.' The approach of care staff raises young people's awareness of others and their own needs for safety and security.

Staff appropriately respond to any concern affecting young people's welfare and take effective action to reduce any further risks. Safeguarding procedures are well understood by staff. They said if there were any concerns they would 'Pass it on to the duty manager'. And 'make sure the young person was safe.' Staff understand how to ensure the safety and welfare of young people.

Young people understand there is a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying so this is not a major issue. Even so, care staff are mindful of the potential for bullying so they are proactive if there is any indication of such behaviour. 'I tell staff if the other kids are annoying me,' a young person said. They are also quick to notice positive improvements in young people's behaviour for example when they exhibit more understanding of other's needs. This is reinforced by offering praise to young people raising their awareness about the positive choices they can make.

Staff provide young people with high levels of structure and supervision so it is rare for young people to go missing. Systems are in place should a young person become missing and staff know what to do in this event. Young people know their safety and wellbeing is of paramount importance to staff and this helps build young people's feelings of security.

There is insufficient consideration and recording of young people's behaviour and the effectiveness of measures to manage behaviour. Staff need to give careful consideration to the possible needs that underlie young people's challenging behaviour that result in restraint. They also need to consider how responses may trigger an escalation in young people's behaviour. 'We try to resolve the issue there and then and so they don't escalate the behaviour,' staff said. Sanctions records need to detail the behaviour leading to the sanction, the name of the person giving the sanction and make clear the effectiveness of the measure used.

Young people are cared for by staff who are subject to rigorous recruitment checks. Staff turnover is low, no staff have left the home since the last inspection and one new member of staff has been appointed. The majority of staff hold the necessary qualification and other staff are working towards achieving this. Young people live in a setting that looks and feels comfortable and homely and which is furnished to a high standard. Maintenance is ongoing and any upkeep and repair is carried out. This helps young people take pride in their surroundings and feel valued.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager is a suitably qualified and experienced individual who was appointed to the post in 2004. The recommendation about care plans from the previous inspection has been now been met. There are no other outstanding requirement or recommendation. The Registered Manager has not undertaken any recent external training to promote professional development and needs to ensure that all staff have an up to date understanding of those areas of specialist practice within the home.

Staff meetings take place and young people's needs are a high priority. Staff are well informed about the needs of individual young people and this helps to keep them safe. The Registered manager reviews the individual needs of young people on a regular basis and this further promotes effective practice so that young people are cared for by staff who plan effectively to keep them safe whatever the circumstances.

Independent visitors' reports do not sufficiently demonstrate accurate examination of young people's records and consultation with social workers and staff. These reports, which are required by Ofsted, indicated that information was held on young people's files when this was not the case. Insufficient scrutiny and examination in these areas undermines confidence about systems aimed at ensuring effective monitoring of the home.

Young people receive care from staff which is accurately reflected within the homes statement of purpose and the children's guide. This document contains all of the information required by legislation and outlines the approach and ethos of the home. Staff qualifications and experience are also included. Young people experience a

quality of care that is consistent and helps maintain young people's trust.

Young people live in a home that is adequately resourced and maintained to a high standard. There has been some recent refurbishment of the home due to accidental damage caused by flooding. The home is being redecorated throughout and there are also plans to replace all young people's showers within their rooms. 'The kitchen is much better now and the lounge,' a young person said. Young people feel valued by the measures taken to ensure their home is properly repaired and upgraded.

Registered Manager reports required by legislation do not sufficiently demonstrate how the quality of care young people receive is improved. However reports do make clear that effective consultation takes place with young people, social workers and parents. 'We keep a record of when we have spoken to parents and the social worker,' a senior member of staff said. Consultation with young people and professionals demonstrates that living in the home is a positive experience. The Registered Manager has a development plan in place that includes an overall plan for the home and also reflects young people's individual needs. Reports compiled by staff for looked after reviews are of very good quality and evidence the progress young people have made. 'Young people love them, they are proud of what they have achieved,' staff said. Young people's care plans make clear to them and those responsible for them the positive improvements they make within all areas of their life.

Staff encourage young people's contribution to reports they write for their looked after reviews. Staff record the actions arising from looked after reviews so they are clear about their responsibilities. They contact social workers if review reports are overdue to request receipt of these. Staff make sure young people's needs are not compromised as a result of the late submission of looked after review decisions.

Child friendly care plans aid young people's understanding of their backgrounds, histories and goals for the future. Young people's records are stored securely within locked cabinets within a lockable office. Young people know they can see the information staff hold about them. The Registered Manager knows what action to take in the event of any significant concerns affecting the safety of young people. There have not been any notifications received since the last inspection.

Staff are sufficient in number, experience and qualification to care for young people. There are always two staff on duty in addition to the Registered Manager, one of whom is available to support young people within their school setting. This approach helps young people's transition from home to school.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.