

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	26/01/2016
Unique reference number	SC000820
Type of inspection	Full
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	26/01/2016
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	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC000820

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people make very good progress due to the quality of care provided. The relationships between the staff and young people are a key factor in bringing about positive outcomes.
- Young people gain confidence, esteem and self-reliance. They feel safe and assured because of clear boundaries, well-structured care and consistency in day-to-day routines.
- Care practices are highly successful. They are based on research and expertise and help deliver the aims and objectives of the home as defined in its Statement of Purpose.
- The registered manager is experienced and leads the team well. Staff are supported by effective training, regular one-to-one supervision and good procedures for communication.
- Procedures for assessing risks that may affect young people are not sufficiently informative. There is a lack of clarity about why some risk ratings are high and about strategies to reduce them.
- The telephone system does not provide sufficient privacy because unauthorised people can listen in to conversations.

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
Ascertain and report on the opinions of staff working at the home when conducting the quality of care reviews. (Regulation 45(5))	30/04/2016

Recommendations

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

- Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, record in their risk assessment the details of 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)
- 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)
- Follow government guidance regarding which statutory agencies should be contacted when conducting the annual review of the suitability of the location of the home. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 64 paragraph 15.1)
- Ensure that the registered manager's quality of care reviews are underpinned by the Quality Standards as described in regulations 5 to 14. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 65 paragraph 15.2).

Full report

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
24/02/2015	CH - Interim	Sustained Effectiveness
10/11/2014	CH - Full	Good
20/02/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
05/11/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home.	Good
The home is successful in enabling young people to develop positively to become mature and well-rounded individuals. The registered manager provides good leadership and the registered provider gives strong support also. There are weaknesses in the promotion of safety. These are not sufficiently significant to affect the overall quality and effectiveness of care provided. The registered manager and staff know and understand the needs of young people well. They provide care that is individualised to each of their needs. This enables young people to develop towards achieving their potential. Relationships between the staff and young people are very positive. A young person summed this up saying, 'I like living here. The best thing about it is the staff. They care and they try to help us.' The staff have a value-based philosophy which is focused on supporting each young person to become a whole, rounded individual capable of succeeding as an adult in the wider world. These values are clearly outlined in the home's Statement of Purpose and are implemented effectively on an ongoing basis in day-to-day care. Young people make strong progress across a range of areas such as emotional and physical health, education, social skills and behaviour. All four young people spoken with said that they felt they had developed positively since they came to live in the home and since the previous inspection. One young person said, 'Before I came here I was angry, I never used to smile and I was shy. Now I laugh a lot more and I'm more confident. I'm happy!' Another young person said, 'I'm doing better in education now. I've learnt more and know how to do things I didn't used to know. I think this will help me when I'm older.' The home is effective in helping young people to develop knowledge and skills which will be helpful when older and living independently. One young person summed this up saying, 'I feel more confident now because I go on errands to the shops. I can buy food and am learning how to cook. I like to meet and chat with the local shopkeepers. I get a buzz when I get back and have done these things.' Each young person has a clear independence programme. This is tailored to reflect their age and ability. The registered manager liaises with external agencies and placing authorities to ensure young people leave the home at age 18 successfully. Young people enjoy a wide variety of leisure time activities. The registered manager and staff put time into evaluating activities. Their training and guidance	

enables them to understand the benefits different activities may have. Each activity is assessed across a range of outcomes such as physical fitness, social development, mastery of a skill, stimulation etc. A member of staff summed this up saying, 'We don't just go on an activity to fill the time. We consider what the benefits are. So instead of just going for a walk, we walked The Teesdale Way. Now we're walking the Weardale Way. This gives the young people a sense of status by being able to say 'I've done that.'

The house has a very homely feel. The furnishings are comfortable and of a high standard. There are photographs of young people on the walls, and young people help to choose the décor. All young people have ensuite facilities in their bedroom. All bathrooms and ensuite facilities have been refurbished since the previous inspection. One young person said, 'My ensuite has been done up. We used to have tiles but now we have panels which are better.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected.	Requires Improvement
Young people are safe and feel safe. The staffing levels provide for good levels of supervision of young people. Young people are only admitted to the home following a detailed assessment of their background and needs. These assessments take full account of safety in terms of each young person and those around them in the home and in the community. Over recent months the home has implemented new procedures for assessing risks that might affect young people. The system is not yet fully embedded. Risk assessment documentation is not fully informative and does not provide sufficient details or accountability. For example, it is not always clear how high risk ratings have been achieved, or what must be done to bring these levels down. There are some minor shortfalls in safeguarding practice. These relate to the recording of complaints, recruitment checks and about who conducts discussions with young people when they have returned from being missing. The telephone arrangements in the home do not protect confidentiality of information. It is possible for young people to pick up a phone in the lounge or hallway and listen to conversations staff or other young people may be holding. Although there is no evidence this has happened, it is a potential weakness in the procedures for protecting privacy. This is especially important as some conversations can include discussions of sensitive and personal information. Young people rarely go missing. Where this may have been a problem prior to	

admission, the pattern soon disappears after coming to live at the home. This enhances their safety significantly. A young person summed this up saying, 'We don't go missing because we don't want to. I think it's because we like living here.' The registered manager and staff are effective at minimising risks of exploitation and promoting safety in the house and in the community. They strike a safe balance between enabling young people to experience risk and challenges safely while also protecting welfare.

Young people behave well. This is a reflection they are happy and settled. A young person summed this up saying, 'I used to be angry before I came here. Now I'm more calm and don't hit out at people.'

The staff rarely need to restrain young people but have the knowledge and skills to do so where necessary. In a pre-inspection survey a young person said, 'Sometimes one of the lads gets restrained. It is handled with utmost respect and high carefulness. When one of the lads gets restrained they are put in safe hands and always calm down almost immediately.' Another said, 'I don't think restraints happen much but I do understand why they happen.'

The registered manager and staff set clear boundaries for young people which they implement consistently on a day-to-day basis. This sense of routine and familiarity helps young people feel settled and secure.

Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. Young people take part in regular fire drills. Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers.	Good
The registered manager has been in his post for nine years and has the appropriate qualifications for their role. The deputy manager also has similar qualifications and the senior staff are currently studying for them. The level of management knowledge and skills is therefore good. The registered manager is very effective at considering and prioritising the varying needs of young people. He maintains a working understanding of young people's needs by working late one evening per week. He also holds a house meeting once a month so can hear directly what young people have to say about the running of the home.	

The registered manager maintains an up-to-date awareness of young people's progress and makes good use of the key worker system. This provides for each young person to have a named member of staff who takes a special interest in their welfare. Young people say the system is useful because they can have one-to-one discussions with them about important matters or concerns.

The staff receive good levels of support. They have an annual appraisal of their performance and regular one-to-one supervision from their line manager. This provides regular opportunities to discuss any issues and provides for discussion about their own development and of young people. The registered manager seeks young people's views about the staff before conducting their annual appraisal. This helps him achieve a rounded picture and helps in delivering accurate feedback about performance.

Induction and training programmes are well-designed and informative. They are based on national research and expertise and provide staff with the knowledge and skills necessary for their role. The registered manager also receives up-to-date guidance from the government's Department for Education, Ofsted and a national charity responsible for promoting excellence in children's homes. He attends relevant meetings held by these organisations and gains useful knowledge about how providers in the residential sector promote positive outcomes for young people.

The registered manager monitors the running of the home on an ongoing basis. The six-monthly reports covering these matters are not fully informative because there is no evidence that the registered manager has asked the staff what they think about the quality of care. The reports also do not cover the range of issues that are required by legislation.

In accordance with legal requirements, an independent person visits the home once a month. They meet the young people and staff and contact parents, carers and social workers. They write a report on their findings and make recommendations where necessary. These visits and reports are of good quality and help to home to maintain a high standard of care and to improve where necessary.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose available on its website. This summarises the aims of the home as being 'To provide the highest quality care to enable children to overcome the difficulties and traumas of the past. Thereby providing a firm foundation from which they can grow through adolescence into adulthood as successful human beings, able to function in, and contribute, to society.' The registered manager is effective in enabling this aim to be met.

The registered manager and staff have effective working relationships with external agencies who provide specialist expertise. These provide young people with targeted support to overcome trauma and abuse and to address concerns

about behaviour. Where such agencies or placing authorities are not delivering support in line with expectations, the registered manager challenges them to do so.

When conducting the annual review of the location of the children's home, the registered manager does not seek feedback from a wide enough range of agencies. This means important information which a local agency such as the youth offending team or child protection unit may have about risks in the locality of the home may be missed.

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 looked after children 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 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 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 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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