

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC005067
Inspector	Christy Wannop
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Esland North Limited
Registered person address	Unit 1 & 5 Foundry Lane Milford BELPER Derbyshire DE56 0RN
Responsible individual	John Stamp
Registered manager	Victoria Chant
Date of last inspection	07/08/2014

Inspection date	18/02/2015
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Previous inspection	sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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This children's home is much more effective since the previous inspection. Some aspects require further improvement: more bathrooms, written responses to young people's complaints and better recruitment records.

The overall picture is of a good service. Staff meet young people's needs well and good relationships are the basis for some excellent direct work. Highly competent leadership sets an ethos of high warmth and close parenting. Staff nurture and develop young people's confidence. Care planning is good and delivers the aims of young people's placements. Young people feel at home. They trust staff to keep them safe and to represent them. Placing authorities value this support. The local safeguarding authority recognises the significant positive impact of the Registered Manager in enhancing the quality of care. Thoughtful, reflective care practice and a resourceful manager have a positive effect on young people's life chances.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is part of a private organisation providing up to six placements for young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/08/2014	Interim	sustained effectiveness
14/08/2013	Full	adequate
24/06/2013	Full	inadequate
04/02/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress

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
31 (2001)	ensure the premises are suitable for achieving the aims and objectives set out in the home's statement of purpose- with specific reference to repairs to the drive and sufficiency of baths and showers in the main house. (Regulation 31)	31/08/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people who make formal complaint or representation, get a

more formal response so they know their concerns have been respected (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.29)

- demonstrate, including from written and electronic records that the registered person consistently follows good recruitment practice and all applicable current statutory requirements and guidance, in staff recruitment and carers' selection (NMS 16.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Children and young people have a positive, caring experience at this home. They make good attachments to the consistent adults who care for them. Staff understand their backgrounds and early life experiences and have a good sense of their journey in care. This helps them to make some sense of their family histories and means that staff can support them when family relationships are difficult or upsetting. They get support to keep in touch with family and friends, and guidance about friendships that are not helpful or positive.

Some young people are extremely vulnerable and are sometimes at risk because they find it hard to resist negative influences. They get good help to take better care of themselves and learn about keeping safe in unsafe situations, on line and when out in town. They learn how to do the right thing and stay out of trouble. Some young people have set backs, but overall, they are significantly more secure and stable. Their offending, alcohol and drug abuse has stopped. Signs of distress decrease and young people develop healthy wellbeing. Their ability to take care of themselves gets better.

All young people have done better in education, when considering their starting points, since moving in to the home. One young person said staff help, 'all the time' with course work and assignments. For one, staying in school is a struggle and they are not currently receiving their statutory entitlement, despite strong support from the home to secure a full-time education. Staff advocate on their behalf with placing and host local authorities to find the right solution. The majority have settled into school, take exams, complete courses, and are making plans for the next stage of their life as independent young adults. Young people talk of the lengths they go to get to school, even in bad weather, when they walk through snow to get up the approach road and get on transport.

Staff are great role models for healthy lifestyles. Young people eat well and cook in a family kitchen. They are active, out in their local community, going rock climbing, swimming, and on adventure activities. They play football and enjoy free-running. They went on a foreign holiday or chose a short-break in the capital. They can have pets, one has a hamster. These opportunities enrich their lives.

Several young people are moving on within the next year: some because they are old enough now to leave care, others are moving to foster care. They have good preparation from staff to learn the skills they need, either in practical self-help or with improved emotional resilience to help them make positive attachments with new carers. They learn to drive, save money, and get part time work. They get help to live as ordinary a life as possible and be confident about their future. One said: 'it's easy if

you ask for the right stuff.'

Quality of care

good

Staff offer a parenting approach that challenges young people when necessary, protects them, and delivers nurturing care. Relationships and behaviour are generally good, but some young people can be challenging. Staff have constructive guidance from the Registered Manager about reducing conflict and frequency of physical intervention has reduced over time. Young people focus on rewards rather than sanctions. They like the incentive scheme, which gives them everyday treats like going for a hot chocolate with staff in the local coffee shop. If they stop smoking, the manager gives them extra pocket money.

When young people complain, staff make sure that they understand what they have done to sort things out. However, the manager does not always make a formal written response directly to the young person. The system for consultation and communication about how the home runs, and about young people's lives is otherwise good. Some young people resist talking about their life in care and say they do not want to be reminded about it. Others find consultation repetitive. Despite this, the manager has established their democratic right to have a say in the way things happen. She encourages staff in new and creative ways of gathering their views and sharing important messages about their care. Staff take the opportunity at young people's meetings to raise issues of difference and diversity and about respect.

Care planning and direct work is effective. Key working sessions reflect the key issues in their lives, such as sexual health, relationships, running away, and anger. Resources to support these sessions and make them more interesting and practical are improving. It is clear to see the progress towards the aims of the placement. Staff create excellent 'cartoon-strip' pictorial reports for young people every week. This presents a day-by-day account of their activities and the positive things staff have said or noticed about them. This is a wonderful record of staff praise and their achievements and provides a valuable memento of their time at the home. It is also a useful tool to prompt young people to reflect and talk about how things are going.

The registered person works cooperatively, challenging where necessary, to find or deliver additional support for children identified in the local authority plan. They source external qualified therapeutic support, even when the local child and adolescent mental health team does not have capacity to meet need or young people require different kinds of therapy, such as 'talking', art or play. They advocate with the local authority where they think these additional therapies would benefit young people, or when they see delay. A placing social worker recognised the good work care staff do, in helpful key working sessions, to try to fill this gap.

Daily life in the home supports young people to go to bed in good time, and be awake and ready for school in the morning. Most go regularly to school or college and are doing well. A placing social worker described how staff made great efforts to get a young person to school, 'even if he was late.' However, not all young people have full time education. One has found school very difficult and regularly walked a significant distance back to the home in distress. The registered person has made significant efforts: finding alternative placements; calling professionals to meetings to resolve barriers, and seeking alternative tuition at the home to maintain learning. This situation is currently unresolved: the Registered Manager continues to press for a resolution and secure education before the exam years begin.

The registered person now owns the houses, which means young people have a secure home. The registered person removed an unsuitable bathroom last year, and this puts pressure on the household in the morning, leaving just one bathroom for as many as six young people and staff to share. The children's home consists of two large, detached, adjacent houses and a separate staff office outbuilding. Young people have plenty of private and shared space in their comfortable houses. The country location gives good opportunities for constructive leisure.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Staff keep young people safe and are alert to any changes in their behaviour that indicate an escalating level of risk. They have clear conversations about harm and how to keep safe. Young people go missing less and when they do, staff act responsibly. They work with the police and parents, go looking for them and bring them home. They work creatively when young people are at risk of sexual exploitation and make sure that they implement protective strategies and share information to prevent recurrence.

Some young people get angry with their peers. Staff encourage respect and follow up incidents of bullying behaviour to make clear their expectations. Dominant young people learn to respect those who are less powerful and staff step in to protect vulnerable young people.

Staff at all levels are clear about their responsibility to speak up if they suspect abuse or a young person makes an allegation. The local area designated officer says that the Registered Manager sets positive culture of genuine partnership working and early consultation about thresholds for reporting. This protects young people, who say they feel safe.

Safer recruitment is not well evidenced in the records held at the home. The Registered Manager selects staff using clear safeguarding principles to ensure that only suitable adults work with young people. Most permanent staff have recruitment files at the home which demonstrate this, but there is not a record in the home for all

staff working temporarily at the home, transferred from elsewhere in the company.

Local police have said that the isolated location protects young people at risk of sexual exploitation, or going missing from home. Regular health and safety and fire checks keep the environment safe for everyone. In snowy weather, the house is sometimes cut off from the main road. Staff and young people prepare for this; tried and tested emergency plans make sure that there is enough food and fuel to keep going over a few days. The approach road is now rocky and uneven and in need of resurfacing. The registered person does not own the road, but has done some patching and negotiated with the owner to further repair and make it safe.

Leadership and management

good

Leadership of this service is effective and delivers improvement. The service has achieved a good rating for the first time in several years and this reflects the growing skill and expertise in the organisation and in the home. The Registered Manager has been in post since July 2013 and holds a nationally recognised qualification in management and working with children and young people. Young people express their confidence and say they want her to sleep over at the home more often. The service manager above the Registered Manager is also new and provides an informed, professional steer.

The manager demonstrates the capacity for improvement because she has taken effective action to meet previous regulatory shortfalls. She has only admitted young people to the home, whose needs the service can meet and she has established pre-admission assessment procedures to ensure this. Consequently, the home is now delivering the aims described in the Statement of Purpose. They have provided stability for siblings, who have lived together separately from other young people, in one of the two houses. They are moving away from emergency admissions towards medium to long term care. No placements have broken down. Several young people are getting ready to move on positively, in a planned way, because they are ready for the next step in their lives.

Managerial monitoring systems are now much better. The new quarterly report of the review of the quality of care consults with stakeholders. It is evaluative and clear about the progress young people make and any barriers to their wellbeing and sets plans for action. Monthly visits by an independent visitor are also stronger; they now reflect the focus on young people's safety and welfare. These improvements in governance mean that the registered person has a better grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the home.

Well-trained and well-supported staff put their skills into action in their work with young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. They express satisfaction in seeing young people stabilise and progress in education, in their relationships with others and in their self-control. They respect the Registered Manager for her insight

and value the guidance she gives them to improve their care practice. There are enough staff working directly with young people to keep them safe and busy. The shift pattern delivers consistency. There is always someone working who knows what happened in young people's lives yesterday, and what should be happening tomorrow. They know they can rely on staff.

Record keeping is comprehensive. Staff manage incidents well and make sure they keep Ofsted, parents and placing authorities informed. The Registered Manager is a passionate advocate for young people, keen to learn lessons and identify improvements in practice after any incident or allegation. The service has a growing confidence in partnership working, including challenging placing authorities when necessary. This reflective but systematic approach delivers a good service.

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.