

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC006294
Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered manager	Amanda Farnaby
Date of last inspection	19/03/2014

Inspection date	11/11/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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Young people receive high quality, well planned individualised care in a supportive and nurturing home environment. A core group of consistent and skilled staff ensure that young people are safely cared for, feel secure and make significant progress from their starting points. This is specifically noted in young people's education, health, social development, self-esteem and risk management.

A conscientious and committed staff team effectively build strong and trusting relationships with young people. This is irrespective of the young people's very diverse needs and challenges. The staff team's resilience and tenacity to improve young people's outcomes has been effective in the notable differences in improving young people's outcomes. This is strengthened by excellent partnerships with external professionals that promote strong and creative working together practices. These outstanding interventions promote young people's welfare and help them to promptly access the services they need. A social worker said, 'I was happy with the communication and helping to keep (name) safe. I was very impressed by them'.

Strong leadership and management support a service that is aspirational for young people. The Registered Manager makes effective use of a range of monitoring tools, including young people's views, to ensure that the home continues to make a positive difference to young people's lives.

Two recommendations are raised as a result of this inspection in relation to a behavioural and recruitment issue. These shortfalls do not have a negative impact on young people's outcomes, safety and welfare.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a private company and is registered to provide care for up to four young people of either gender. The Statement of Purpose for the home identifies the primary reason for a young person's placement is to support their emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
24/07/2013	Full	outstanding
26/10/2012	Interim	good progress
26/06/2012	Full	good

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

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour, in a way that is appropriate to their age and abilities. Specifically in relation to derogatory, racist language (NMS 3.6).
- ensure that the registered person can demonstrate, including from written and electronic records, that it consistently follows good recruitment practices. Specifically in relation to checking discrepancies in employment history dates that are submitted by the applicant and referee to ensure clarity of information (NMS 16.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Overall young people have made demonstrably good progress from their starting points. Contributing factors include their strong relationships with staff that stimulate appropriate attachments, trust and mutual respect. This supports a safe and nurturing environment where young people can make sense of their histories and get involved in shaping their future plans. Young people are majorly responsive to the interventions that promote their holistic needs. There are some young people who are reluctant to work with specific agencies. Specifically professionals who are legally charged with helping them to learn lessons from their previous anti-social behaviours. However one of these meetings resulted in derogatory, racist language which was considered by the home to be an isolated incident. The manager has given a firm undertaking to address this issue to ensure that young people takes responsibility and ceases this behaviour.

Young people experience excellent school attendance and good attainment. Young people previously not engaged in education now regularly attend training placements, which is significant progress. Young people's emotional resilience and confidence is enhanced by the support they receive from staff who value their education. For example, encouraging young people to complete homework. The strong communication between the home and education providers shows that staff care about young people reaching their potential. Young people's self-esteem is enhanced by the consistent praise they receive for their achievements. Their engagement in their learning improves their chances of success in the world of work and further education.

Young people understand the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. Their registration with health professionals enables them to receive prompt routine and specialist health interventions. Young people's engagement with a good range of health professionals and staff effectively helps them to reduce risky and habitual behaviours. Positively, young people understand that if such behaviours are sustained it could have a devastating impact on their health. Young people benefit from good advice and support in relation to puberty and sexual health issues. Their awareness is raised with respect to self-examination to protect them from specific illnesses. Young people enjoy a varied, healthy diet, enjoying home cooked meals. They benefit from opportunities to keep fit through activities both in the home and community.

Young people's contact with their family enables them to remain connected with significant people in their lives and maintain a strong sense of identity. They are effectively supported to cope with their emotions arising from contacts that may impact on their behaviour. Young people's regular contact with friends provides them with opportunities to socialise while enabling staff to get to know young people's friends as a good parent would do.

Young people enjoy being part of the local community and their involvement counts. For example, young people were supported at short notice by staff to bake cakes to take to school to go towards raising money for a children's charity. Their involvement and the amount of money raised helps the young people to feel empathy and a sense of achievement in making a positive contribution to society. Pathway plans are in place for eligible young people and they are encouraged to take more ownership of the expectations of the plans. Notwithstanding this, young people are involved in helping around the house, choosing the décor for the home and carrying out domestic chores. This helps them to develop their self-help skills and involves them in typical family life activities.

Quality of care

outstanding

Young people's care and support is underpinned by individual, high quality placement plans that fully detail how their assessed needs will be met. Young people confirm they understand their plans and they may choose to read and record their comments. Young people also engage with staff during individual key work sessions to ensure the desired outcomes of their plans are fully met. Although this is without challenge at times, staff continue to persevere to ensure a clear steer on improving outcomes. In some cases, young people's outcomes are exceeded as they thrive in the home. Social workers said about the home, 'They are brilliant. They are not impeding x' and 'I think that (name) offered everything we requested. (name) was able to put plans in place' and 'I am 100% sure that they are meeting x's needs'.

Young people greatly benefit from living in a friendly, nurturing and aspirational home where their achievements are celebrated and rewarded. Staff speak very positively about the young people. They have an excellent, detailed knowledge of their personalities and behaviours. A social worker said, 'They just seem to get x'. The staff team's strong reluctance to give up on young people, irrespective of their diverse and complex challenges make young people feel genuinely cared about. A young person described living in the home as 'brilliant'. A social worker described the home as 'absolutely wonderful'.

Young people are well cared for by a resilient staff team that places their needs at the centre of care practices. The team's excellent skills of engagement and tenacity aid them to develop appropriate attachments with young people within clear routines and boundaries. This stimulates positive and open relationships between staff and young people who in turn are also encouraged to live harmoniously together. Staff work diligently with young people with relative success to reduce incidences of negative and risky behaviours. This helps young people to develop socially acceptable behaviours.

Young people confirm that they can talk to staff if they have any worries or concerns. This empowers young people to release any pressures that may impact on their

emotional health. Their wishes and feelings are highly regarded at this home. This means that young people can influence their care planning and the running of the home without fear or favour. For example, young people are involved in signing up to their plans, which focuses them on committing to the agreements made about their care. They are involved in their reviews and may choose to attend and contribute to their meetings or allow staff to advocate on their behalf. Young people's input into their activities, meals, routines, décor and purchases in the home promotes choice and values their opinions.

Excellent partnerships with external agencies in social care, youth offending, health and education services ensures that young people receive prompt support. For example, young people have significantly reduced their alcohol and substance misuse through their engagement with drug workers. Their involvement with health professionals is helping to identify and manage health concerns. The home's excellent communication with education settings ensures that any issues are countered before they escalate.

Young people enjoy a really good range of activities both in the home and community. These are specific to their needs and abilities which means that young people can make the most of their free time. Recent trips have included the seaside, museums and the cinema. Activities in the home, such as playing on computer games, listening to music and playing board games provide young people with hours of fun and stimulation. Older young people prefer to socialise with friends, which satisfies their interests.

Young people live in a pleasant, well decorated home where they want to invite their friends. Young people's rooms are personalised to suit their individual tastes and they make good use of the communal facilities. Parts of the home have been refurbished and other parts are close to completion. This includes the lounge and the young people's study that has been decorated in contemporary images that young people can identify with. Young people use the study where they can use the computer for academic work, play computer games and socialise with their friends. The home environment is a welcoming place for young people who have established themselves there.

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

A strong safeguarding culture in this home ensures that young people are safe and feel safe irrespective of the challenges presented by them. A major strength is the excellent relationships with partner agencies, such as social care professionals, police and health practitioners whose excellent working together galvanises and supports young people's safety and welfare. One young person said that their level of safety is 'good'.

The proactive staff team are highly alert and responsive to young people's diverse

vulnerabilities. To this end, staff work extremely hard to ensure that the measures implemented protect young people from significant harm. Exceptionally strong risk management and team communication underpins current safeguarding practices. This provides a strong safeguarding message that young people understand and know will be acted on to keep them safe. For example, young people are helped to understand safe and appropriate boundaries with respect to physical contact with familiar and unfamiliar people. Young people are also learning protective strategies whilst out in the community, which successfully maintains their independence yet keeps them safe. Staff are vigilant about young people's behaviour when they return to the home. They specifically monitor young people who return home under the influence of drugs and alcohol and their swift action on one occasion averted a potentially fatal incident. This exemplar contributes to young people's strong sense of security and they know that staff prioritise their safety and well-being. Additional measures, such as seeking legal orders where appropriate, allows for a stronger control on decisions about young people's welfare. Professionals speak highly about the way the home protects young people and raise no safety and welfare concerns.

Young people do not identify bullying as an issue for them at this home, mainly due to their close supervision and differing age-related interests. However, where this issue has been highlighted in other environments, such as school, it has been dealt with and resolved. This helps young people feel cared for and protected.

Young people benefit from a strong and creative staff team who take robust action when they have been reported missing from this home. This includes following the locally agreed protocols with the police. Staff proactively leave the home and search likely or known areas where young people may frequent. Their contact with young people on their mobile phones also ensures they remain in touch and staff encourage their safe return home. These interventions are successful in stimulating a sense of being valued by the young people and missing from care episodes have decreased.

Young people respond positively to the clear routines and boundaries. These are compatible with their needs as set out in their high quality placement plans. Staff relationships with young people are extremely well developed to the extent that young people's triggers are understood and their challenging behaviours are effectively managed. A social worker said, 'they are managing really, really well and know (name's) triggers and how to manage (name) by following the plan'. Serious incidents influence the review of risk management practices which ensures updated strategies are in place to reduce any risk taking and damaging behaviour. Young people benefit from the rewards on offer, which are attainable and celebrate their good behaviour. They are helped to understand the consequences of their negative behaviour, which is age appropriate and individual to the young person. This helps young people to think about the impact of their behaviour on others, show empathy and socially acceptable interactions. As a consequence of the positive relationships, strong engagement and regular behaviour management training; sanctions are few and restraint has not been used since 2011.

Staff recruitment and vetting is sufficiently robust to protect unsuitable people from having access to young people. However information contained in an application form provides a lack of clarity with respect to employment history dates. This shortfall has not impacted on young people's welfare and the manager has immediately responded to the issue. This demonstrates that they take these matters seriously.

Young people's physical safety is protected by robust health and safety arrangements. Regular fire drills ensure young people can safely exit the premises in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

outstanding

Young people benefit immensely from effective leadership and management oversight that is aspirational and confidently meets their very diverse needs. This positive culture underpins the outstanding care practice afforded to young people who live at this home.

The Registered Manager has been in post since July 2009. She has the relevant care and management qualifications to efficiently and competently carry out this role. She is currently studying towards another qualification to further develop her knowledge and skills which also provides positive role modelling to the team. An experienced and qualified deputy who is new to this home works compatibly with the manager. Both senior and core staff complement the overall make-up of an upbeat and motivated team who go the extra mile for young people. Their 'can do' attitude towards caring for young people clearly demonstrates their commitment to improving young people's life chances. This values young people. Staff said, 'it's a happy home' and 'I love it here'.

Rigorous internal and external monitoring activities ensure that the home's strengths are built on and weakness is tackled. This includes incorporating the views of young people, stakeholders and staff to inform young people's quality of care, safety and future plans. This is one of several mechanisms used by the home that provide strong indicators that the home can meet young people's needs. This also enables the manager and team to drive forward improvements in a timely fashion.

A sufficient number of competent and experienced staff makes sure that young people's changing needs continue to be well met and in some cases, exceeded. Staff are well retained, which promotes stability and gives young people a strong sense of worth. Members of staff are either qualified or working towards a relevant childcare qualification. They welcome the training they receive and use it to influence their direct care of young people. In addition to mandatory training, staff have benefitted from drugs awareness training in relation to 'legal highs' and life story work. Staff are optimistic about the training delivered by the youth offending team in relation to restorative practice with young people and further training opportunities. A member

of staff said, 'I love training. I never think you are too old to learn'.

Effective and regular staff supervision satisfies the staff team's support, performance and development needs. Staff speak positively about the quality of their supervision and peer support, which helps them to continue to deliver their roles and responsibilities. Excellent team communication in the form of team meetings and daily handovers ensure that all staff are kept up to date with young people's changing needs and priorities.

A progressive development plan supports the improvement agenda and actively serves as a working document. Improvements made since the last inspection include meeting previous requirements and shows that the home has capacity to improve. This is demonstrated in the improvements made to better integrate young people's views in all aspects of their care and support. Professional stakeholders speak in highly complementary terms about the standards of care at this home. Professionals said, 'Staff are great. If they do need something they will ask'. They also commented without exception about the high standard of communication that they share with the home and the team is described as being 'proactive'. An excellent level of transparency is derived from this practice, which keeps a focus on young people's development and progress.

The home's comprehensive Statement of Purpose and Function fully sets out the home's aims and objectives. This informs young people, professionals and parents about the home's approach to childcare and the services that are intended to enhance young people's outcomes.

Young people benefit from detailed and well organised records. They provide a clear picture of young people's life experiences and memories that they can reflect on now and in the future.

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.