

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC007608
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	Gillian Graham
Date of last inspection	12/02/2014

Inspection date	24/10/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	None

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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Young people enjoy outcomes which are outstanding, taking into account the point from which they started. Young people's development is greatly improved, helping to increase their capacity to make and sustain trusting relationships with staff and their peers. 'They have an excellent relationship with my young person and meet their needs to a high standard,' a social worker said. Young people's physical and emotional wellbeing is improved as a result of the care and support they receive. Young people's school attendance is excellent; their academic and vocational achievements are also very good. Young people contribute to their in-house and wider communities, which also builds their self-esteem and confidence.

Staff ensure a good quality of care is provided to young people. Young people influence the care they receive and are involved in their looked after reviews and care planning. 'The standard of care is exceptional,' a social worker said. Care plans for young people are individually tailored to reflect their achievements and experiences. They are in a child friendly format, providing young people with a meaningful narrative of their lives while at the home. Young people get on well with staff and generally get on very well with one another. Young people learn their needs are a priority for those who look after them. This approach meets young people's emotional and developmental needs and helps improve their social skills. There are two recommendations made relating to this aspect.

Young people feel safe and staff keep them safe. Young people rarely go missing or experience bullying, and staff know how to safely support young people in either event. Risk assessments are reviewed with the aim of reducing the likelihood of any concerning behaviours. A staff member said: 'We work as a team and we discuss things, we agree a strategy and we stick to it.' and 'If they know you and where they stand with you they feel safe.' Staff model what adults do to keep young people safe, this builds trusts and helps young people to develop their own safe care skills. There are two recommendations made relating to this aspect

Both leadership and management of the home are good. Staff receive the necessary support, regular supervision and maintain mandatory training. Sufficiently qualified and experienced staff provide good levels of supervision so young people fully participate in education and leisure activities. The Registered Manager needs to undertake additional training to enhance their existing skills. Reports required by legislation to monitor and improve quality of care need to demonstrate what happens in practice. As a result, there is one requirement and one recommendation made so that the provider complies with the legislation.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home accommodates up to three young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is provided by a private organisation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/02/2014	Interim	good progress
01/10/2013	Full	good
06/11/2012	Interim	good progress
13/06/2012	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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take

account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children. In particular, they make clear the effectiveness of any measure used and that records are signed by the person authorised to administer the sanction (NMS 3.8)
- ensure staff make positive relationships with children in the home, generate a culture of openness and trust and are aware of and alert to any signs or symptoms that might indicate that a child is at risk of harm. In particular, make clear any known triggers within risk assessments (NMS 4.3)
- ensure the home implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. In particular, make clear within risk assessments that in the event of any self harm type behaviour by any young person what effective measures are to be taken in consultation with other professionals to reduce the risk and keep the young people safe. (NMS 4.5)
- ensure that any measure taken relating to avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting. Risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel. In particular, children and young people are not to be required to sign for receipt of pocket money, clothing allowances, or signing of the home's care plans (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 quality of care clearly demonstrate improvements in the quality of care available to children (NMS 21.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people's emotional wellbeing, their self-view and confidence is improved by the approach staff use. Staff relate to each young person as an individual in their own right. Young people are involved in choosing what they like to eat, meal preparation and what they wear. Young people said: 'My clothing allowance gets paid into a bank account,' and 'I have too many clothes.' Young people develop their independent living skills by taking age appropriate responsibility for their bedroom and pets. Young people receive effective support from staff to help prepare them for independent living.

Young people's overall health and wellbeing are significantly improved because they are enabled to experience an exceptionally healthy lifestyle. Staff are up to date with mandatory training, contributing to young people's continued good health. 'They are going kayaking this morning,' and 'They have been fishing,' a member of staff said. Staff make sure young people receive all necessary help to access physical and psychological health services as necessary. Young people realise the choices they make can lead to improved physical wellbeing, this builds confidence in their own abilities.

Young people's school attendance is excellent and their educational attainment has improved, considering the point from which they start. Young people attend a school that is part of the provision provided by the home and is rated outstanding by Ofsted. Young people said: 'I love school', 'My favourite subject is horse riding,' and 'I like Humanities, Maths and English.' The ethos of the home is to maximise opportunities for young people's education in a variety of ways. 'They did come dine with me, they don't realise how much they are learning, how to be a host and take care of your guests,' said a member of staff. Staff help young people realise their potential and this increases their social skills and self-esteem.

Staff support young people to take part in a wide range of leisure activities and find creative ways in which they can contribute to their own and wider community. Young people take part in lots of physical activities within their school setting, including activities on the farm and horse care. Young people also participate in community based activities like cadets, scouts, cycling and swimming. 'We had a harvest festival for Help for Heroes,' staff said. 'We raised nearly £400,' a young person said. 'Young people came from other homes,' said a member of staff. Participation in community activities and contributing to the wider community in this way helps build young people's sense of belonging.

Staff understand how important maintaining contact with members of their family is for young people. 'Contact can be difficult for young people,' a member of staff said. 'Yes, fine, I get to see my family.' and 'I get to see them during the holidays,' young

people said. Well managed contact arrangements helps further young people's understanding of their background, culture and identity.

Young people live in a home in which they are expected to take age appropriate responsibility for their personal care and some domestic tasks. 'The young person knows what they want to do when they leave,' a member of staff said. 'I'm starting a two year apprenticeship.' and 'My social worker is supporting me,' a young person said. Staff actively encourage young people to develop their daily living skills in readiness for the time when they will be independent.

Quality of care

good

Young people trust staff, who work well with young people to maintain this. Staff rarely need to intervene to manage young people's behaviour and do so only as a last resort. Young people know that staff will help them with distressed feelings when young people are ready. 'They talked to me afterwards.' and 'I was alright,' a young person said about measures staff took to keep the young person safe. The approach of staff helps young people to think through difficulties and promotes alternative ways of expressing feelings that can be overwhelming. Sanction records need to make clear what young people did that warrants sanctioning and must also show due consideration about the effectiveness of the measure. Unclear sanctions do not help young people to make the link between their behaviour and the outcome.

Staff ensure that young people understand expectations and behavioural boundaries. 'We are not allowed to go into each other's bedrooms or to borrow things from each other,' a young person said. Staff enable increased understanding about what is in the best interests of young people and this helps them learn how to take better care of themselves in their relationships with others.

Staff ensure young people know what to do if they are worried about anything. The responsible individual also ensures young people know any concerns can be brought to their attention. 'I have a stamped address envelope for the responsible individual,' a young people said when asked about how to complain. Young people all said they would 'speak to staff' if there is anything they are concerned about. Young people know that there are additional systems in place outside the home they can use if they need to raise a concern.

Staff compile very good quality reports and child-friendly care plans for young people that focus on their progress and improvements. 'Reports are very professional,' a social worker said. 'I've been to loads of my looked after reviews,' said a young person. Staff tailor the support provided to young people, particular attention is paid to their achievements and accomplishments. This builds young people's self-esteem and confidence.

Staff support young people with issues in relation to gender and personal health.

They promote young people's wellbeing through joint working with other professionals. 'I have always been very impressed with the support and guidance they offer young people,' a social worker said. 'I think contact helps young people maintain their culture,' said a member of staff. Staff promote good relationships between young people by encouraging mutual respect and tolerance. Young people live in a setting which instils a sense of belonging and helps young people develop an individual identity.

Young people enjoy a healthy diet and routinely participate in outdoor activities and leisure pursuits ensuring their physical and emotional wellbeing. 'Some children will tell you everything, some will go quiet, and if they need it we can help them access any other help,' a member of staff said. Staff offer age appropriate supervision and support to young people when taking part in activities. This approach increases the likelihood of improved emotional and physical wellbeing in adulthood.

Young people's full participation in the education is routinely achieved. 'Their attendance is 100%.' and 'The children were showing their work off and their books, they wanted us to see what they had done, in general they do like to show you what they have made,' said a member of staff about an open evening at school. Care staff work in partnership with school staff to maximise opportunities for young people to learn and achieve. Young people's educational accomplishments are recognised and celebrated, building their confidence to embrace ongoing learning.

Young people participate in a wide range of enjoyable and purposeful activities on a daily basis as part of their school day and life in the home. 'They need a big bag for all their changes of clothes, for metal work, for mucking out, for science lab,' said a member of staff in explaining the kit young people routinely took to school. 'My young person has so many positive opportunities and experiences,' a social worker said. Young people's development needs are well met through meaningful activities, helping them learn how to make best use of school and their leisure time.

Young people live in a home that is a large detached period building set in its own grounds that is in keeping with neighbouring dwellings. The home is well maintained externally and internally, comfortably furnished, clean and homely. Young people's bedrooms are furnished to a high standard and reflect their individual personalities and tastes. Young people are routinely asked to sign for receipt of pocket money, care plans and medicines. Staff already have systems in place which demonstrate appropriate administration of these. This practice is not required by guidance or legislation nor is it in keeping with life in a domestic setting. It detracts from young people's relationships with the adults they trust to care for them.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Staff keep young people safe and young people say they feel safe. Staff think carefully about situations where young people put themselves at potential risk and amend their risk assessments accordingly. 'It's safe, staff know what to do to keep us safe, they tell us not to speak to strangers, some people aren't okay,' a young person said. Risk assessments need to make it clear the known triggers that increase young people's vulnerabilities. Risk assessments need to make clear what action staff take to keep young people safe, including previously known significant risk factors. Misinterpreting behaviour as attention seeking rather than attention needing can lead to escalation in young people's behaviour.

Staff understand what to do if a child made an allegation about any adult. A member of staff said: 'The responsible individual has done more safeguarding training', 'You have to believe them,' while another said, 'You can't afford to let them down,' when talking about what action to take in response to this type of concern. Staff help young people understand their vulnerabilities and how to stay safe.

Staff do not tolerate bullying behaviour and as such this a rare occurrence that results in swift and effective action keeping anyone those involved safe. 'They all need to feel safe,' a member of staff said. Staff support young people to safely work through any areas of disagreement.

Young people rarely go missing from the home and they return to the home quickly and receive support with resolving their distressing feelings. 'We have forms on-line, we inform EDT and the duty manager,' said a member of staff. Staff know what to do in this event, including them going looking, and there are systems in place if they need to alert the police. Staff consider factors that may have contributed to this. Young people receive support aimed at helping them find alternative ways of managing overwhelming feelings that can give rise to impulsive behaviour.

Staff rarely have to physically intervene as a means of managing young people's behaviour. Staff are trained appropriately and this is refreshed annually. A member of staff said 'We use Team Teach and we listen.' and 'We do mandatory training all the time, we have recently done health and safety and food hygiene, Team Teach training and fire training.' Young people know staff can help them with their most difficult feelings so they do not put themselves or others at risk.

Young people are cared for by staff who are subjected to rigorous recruitment checks. 'I completed an application form, supplied references, a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service), and provided my passport and other identity documents,' a member of staff said about the recruitment process. Young people receive support from staff who are safe to care for them.

Young people live in a large detached property set in its own grounds. The building is well maintained to ensure it is safe and secure. Sensors are used upstairs at night and an intruder alarm is also routinely used. 'They have a burglar alarm, someone did try to break in, they also have the bing bong so other people don't go into your

room,' said a young person. Young people take part in fire drills at varying times of the day and evening. Staff support the maintenance of a safe environment which raises young people's awareness of their personal safety needs now and in the future.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager has worked at the home for a number of years and is appropriately experienced and suitably qualified. The home is well run and managed. There are no outstanding requirements or recommendations arising from the previous inspection. The Registered Manager needs to ensure up to date understanding of practice developments that the home specialise in. This is to ensure staff deliver the most effective quality of care for young people.

Registered Manager's reports required by legislation do not reflect how quality of care is actually improved in practice. 'The staff and manager of the home are really friendly and child focused, they have an excellent relationship with my young person and meet their needs to a high standard,' a social worker said. Young people's views are canvassed about their lives in the home and those who are significant to them should also be reflected in this process. Less than rigorous review of quality of care diminishes opportunities to further develop what works well and overlooks less than effective practice.

Young people receive care and support from staff in line with the home's statement of purpose and children's guide. Additional good quality information is available to young people, their parents and social workers. This provides more detailed information addressing any questions that might arise about what it is like to live in the home. The Registered Manager is responsible for administering the home's budget and the home is sufficiently resourced to ensure the wellbeing of children.

Young people live in a setting which is well maintained, welcoming, warm and homely. There is an ongoing maintenance programme. 'I'm waiting on the painter and decorator coming,' a senior member of staff said. Ongoing provision of a high quality material environment helps young people and staff to feel valued and take ownership of their surroundings.

Young people know that a person independent of the home visits on a monthly basis who is available to talk to should they want to do so. Reports of the monthly visits carried out are submitted to the responsible individual, the Registered Manager and Ofsted as required by legislation. Reports show aspects of the home have been examined as required. They also highlight many of the positives features that living in the home offers young people. Staff are spoken to as part of this process and young people can also talk to this person should they so wish.

The Registered Manager has in place a development plan that takes into account the

needs of individual young people and the aspirations they hold for them. 'I receive a very impressive report which provides information on all aspects of the young person's life which clearly indicates that staff know the child very well.' and 'She has improved in all aspects of her life,' a social worker said. Young people's life chances are improved as a result of the care and support they receive.

Young people are supported by staff who are supervised. Staff said that supervision takes place monthly, when asked how frequently they receive supervision. 'Medication, first aid, health and safety in care environment, food hygiene, safeguarding,' another member of staff said about training undertaken since being appointed. Staff receive the necessary mandatory training to help equip them to care for young people well.

Staff know what to do to chase information from placing authorities about young people when it is not received within required timescales. Staff reports for young people's looked after reviews are quality documents that make clear the progress and achievements that young people make. 'Reports are very professional,' reported an independent reviewing officer. These are in addition to the child-friendly care plans that young people are provided with. Staff record decisions from looked after reviews so there is no delay with actions they need to progress for young people.

Young people's records are stored securely and they understand that they can access information held about them. 'I like staff to keep my care plans in the office,' a young person said. Child friendly care plans and photo albums that young people receive aid their understanding about difficulties they have experienced and focus on individual achievement. 'They all get photographs of the holidays but they get more pictures of themselves in their individual albums,' a member of staff said.

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.