

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	03/01/2017
Unique reference number	SC008273
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Searchlight Care Services Ltd
Registered provider address	Marcus House Estates, Marcus House, Stoke On Trent ST3 5XA
Responsible individual	Denver Underwood
Registered manager	Marianne Roberts
Inspector	Matt Hedges

Inspection date	03/01/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Improved 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	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC008273

Summary of findings

The children's home's provision is good because:

- Staff have strong relationships with the young person and know him well.
- The young person is making good progress in key areas of his life.
- Staff are committed to keeping the young person safe. He feels safe because of this.
- Management arrangements are strong.
- The staff team has developed good working relationships with a range of other agencies. Professionals talk positively about the staff and the support they provide.
- There are some shortfalls. These relate to challenging another agency, recording, the use of sanctions and management monitoring systems.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
12. The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to missing, the registered person must ensure that: (2)(a)(vi) staff take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare.	03/03/2017
The registered person must ensure that, within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure and the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(v)(vii))	03/03/2017
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(b))	03/03/2017
The registered person must help the independent person, if they consent, to interview in private such of the children's parents and relatives as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (2)(a))	03/03/2017
The registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care provided for children and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (2)(a)(c))	03/03/2017
The registered person must ensure that the system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children's parents and staff. (Regulation 45 (5))	03/03/2017

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that, where the placing authority or another relevant person does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, the home must challenge them to meet the child's needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)
- Ensure that any sanctions used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. In some cases, it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to anyone hurt by their behaviour, and the staff in the home should be skilled to support the child to understand this and carry it out. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- Ensure that the registered person actively seeks independent scrutiny of the home and makes best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- Ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated by a private organisation. The home is registered to provide care for two young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. However, the home only provides care for one young person at any one time, unless the two children are siblings and it is considered appropriate for them to share a bedroom.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
17/11/2015	Full	Good
26/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
03/12/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Staff know the young person well. The staff team has developed good relationships with the young person over several years and offers him highly individualised support. The young person talks positively about this and the time he spends with staff. This helps him to feel settled and improves his day-to-day experiences of living in the home. The young person is making good progress because of the support he receives. He attends school regularly and has exceptional attendance, currently achieving 100%. There are numerous certificates displayed around the home highlighting this, which he is rightly proud of. This high level of attendance helps him to make steady progress academically. Teachers talk positively about the support that staff provide, one teacher stating, 'I wish all care homes were like this, the staff are really proactive.' Staff support the young person to make good progress towards adulthood. They appropriately manage the risks that increasing independence can bring. Consequently, the young person is able to spend more time without staff supervision. The young person is now able to walk to school with friends and no longer requires staff support at school. These achievements help to improve his self-esteem and his social skills. He is also developing his practical skills, including cooking and shopping. This helps to prepare him for later life. Staff actively seek the young person's views and incorporate these when planning the care he receives. This includes how to spend his free time. In addition, staff seek his feelings about the long-term plans for his care. This empowers the young person to take greater control of the decisions affecting him. Staff also support him to see his family. This helps him to understand his background and allows him to keep in touch with the people that are important to him. Relationships between staff and other agencies are generally good. This includes social care and education. Professionals confirm this and talk positively about the home and the communication they have with staff. This helps to make sure that the young person receives the input and services he needs in these areas. However, relationships with some mental health services have been harder to build. The young person was referred to these services and had some initial input but progress has been slow. The management team has taken some steps in an attempt to tackle this. However, they have not challenged this sufficiently. For example, they have not recently made a formal complaint on the young person's behalf, or escalated their concerns effectively. Consequently, the young person does not yet have access to regular support in this area.	

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The young person feels safe. Staff generally identify and assess risk well. They are knowledgeable about the dangers and issues that the young person might face, including the risk of exploitation. They are also aware of the dangers of radicalisation, specifically how vulnerable the young person might be to suggestions from others. This includes engaging in behaviours that may harm himself or other people. Staff discuss their concerns openly with the young person, which helps him to understand them better. Staff work well with education staff and the young person's social worker to reduce these risks. His social worker explained, 'Risk management is good. Staff assess his needs on an ongoing basis... This is one of the best placements I have come across.' The young person spends time away from the home with his peers. On occasion, staff have to reduce the amount of time he is away because of potential risks or concerns about the group he is associating with. The young person generally responds well to these boundaries and is rarely away from the home without the agreement of staff. He is reflective and understands why staff worry about him. The support he receives from staff helps him to be safer. Risk assessments outline some steps that staff should take if the young person did go missing. However, some of these assessments lack other details and are not always up to date. For example, local areas that staff deem as unsuitable for the young person to visit (due to risk) are not always included. In addition, information about the people he is spending time with is not consistently noted. Furthermore, on one occasion staff did not make sure that they carefully and clearly documented the young person's 'free time'. Specifically, staff stated that the young person was away from the home one day until 7pm. Later, they stated that the young person was with staff at 6.35pm. Staff are required to check the young person's phone regularly. This is to make sure that he continues to use it in line with the contract agreed between himself, his social worker and the staff team. However, staff do not always record these checks clearly or in sufficient detail. It is, therefore, unclear whether they have taken effective action. The shortfalls highlighted above are primarily recording issues. There is no evidence that they have negatively affected the care that the young person receives. This is because of the relationships he has with staff and how well the staff know him. Staff make sure that the young person receives consistent boundaries and caring support. Overall, his behaviour has improved because of this. Sanctions are sometimes used in response to negative behaviours. These measures are not	

always restorative in nature. As a result, they do not always help the young person to recognise the impact that his behaviour has on himself or others. In addition, records of these measures are variable. Specifically, some records do not show the steps taken to avoid the use of the sanction. Others fail to record the effectiveness and any consequence of its use. This hinders management oversight and does not always allow staff to reflect on whether they could support the young person differently.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
Management arrangements are strong. A suitably qualified, experienced and registered manager leads the small, consistent staff team. She has been in post since 2012. A competent and enthusiastic deputy manager supports her. The management team prioritises the young person's needs and keeps him at the forefront of its thinking. Because of this, the team understands the progress he is making and the areas where he requires additional support. Staff receive good support from the management team. Staff are able to access a range of relevant training, are suitably qualified, and have regular supervision sessions. This helps staff to feel supported and improves their practice. Staff talk positively about this. The management team understand the home's strengths and weaknesses. They take action quickly when improvements are required and make sure that they achieve the overarching aims and objectives outlined in the statement of purpose. This high-quality oversight is particularly due to the 'hands-on' approach of the deputy manager and the relationship she has with the young person. The management team achieves this despite shortfalls in some monitoring processes. For example, quality of care reviews are not sufficiently evaluative. The reviews also do not include any actions that the management team considers necessary in order to improve the quality of care provided. Furthermore, the quality of care reviews do not ascertain or consider the opinions of relatives or staff. An independent person visits the home regularly. The depth of the reports produced is not always sufficient. For example, the independent person does not seek the views of the young person's family and often does not make any recommendations as to how practice could improve. The registered manager is aware of this issue and has already started to challenge this. The shortfalls described above affect the management team's ability to make best use of the information available from internal and independent monitoring. However, any negative effect of these shortfalls is reduced by other auditing and review systems that are in place and the collaborative nature of the work between the management team, staff and other professionals. Consequently, the young	

person has not been adversely affected and continues to receive high-quality, individualised care.

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 the '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 children looked after 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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