

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC008490
Inspector	Ceri Evans
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Stepping Stones Children's Services Limited
Registered person address	Keys Attachment Centre, Hurstwood Court New Hall Hey Road ROSSENDALE Lancashire BB4 6HR
Responsible individual	Heather Ann Laffin
Registered manager	Sylvia Diane Eboigbe
Date of last inspection	10/03/2014

Inspection date	30/07/2014
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Previous inspection	good 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	good
Leadership and management	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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The overall effectiveness is judged to be outstanding

The home provides excellent quality of care for young people. Young people benefit from individualised care planning that supports their diverse needs. Attachment based care enables young people to forge positive relationships with staff and significant others. Staff are nurturing, skilled and knowledgeable and have a genuine commitment to help young people meet their full potential.

Relationships within the home are positive and young people have benefitted immensely from positive behaviour management strategies. Consequently, risk taking behaviour has reduced. Young people say they feel safe and parents, partner agencies and placing authorities are extremely complimentary about the service.

The Registered Manager demonstrates excellent leadership skills and is committed to continual development of the service. Staff receive high quality supervision on a regular basis and benefit from regular consultation with their therapy colleagues. This further enhances their knowledge base, resilience and ability to provide outstanding care to young people.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a private children's home that is part of a large national organisation. It provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behaviour difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/03/2014	Interim	good progress
16/05/2013	Full	outstanding
14/02/2013	Interim	good progress
19/06/2012	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):

- NMS 22.1 There is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed. This specifically relates to ensure that all newly identified risks are recorded on agreed agency formats.
- NMS 20.7 A clear comprehensive summary of any allegation made against a particular member of staff includes details of how the allegation was followed and resolved. This specifically relates to documenting managers assessment and evaluation of any complaints/allegations made against the staff team.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young People are making good progress and have good outcomes in all areas. One social worker commented that her young person has made 'unbelievable progress' since living in the home and had made massive steps emotionally, physically and on a practical level.

All young people are in school; they have excellent attendance and enjoy education. They have made good progress and have aspirations for their future. Young people are encouraged to achieve and support is in place for them to do so. For example, they are supported to identify activities within the community that will assist them with future education and career opportunities.

Young people are active participants within the home and community. They engage in a wide range of activities such as voluntary work, cadets, music and sports. This has had a positive impact in relation to their confidence, self-esteem and emotional health and wellbeing. Young people are encouraged to express their views and opinions. They have taken the lead in creating their own development plan for the home and have contributed fully with various aspects of support and day to day life. This encourages the young people to feel valued, listened to and respected.

The home has a holistic approach to care. Young people have access to in-house therapists and benefit from living in an environment which encourages positive attachments. Young people have trusting relationships with staff, one young person commented that 'staff help and support me and I feel close to all of them.' This greatly assists with young people's feelings of self-worth and confidence. Furthermore, it enhances their ability to forge healthy relationships in the future.

As a result of living in the home, young people are more confident and self-assured. Consequently, this has had a positive impact on their relationship with their families. Contact is well organised, safe and overall a positive experience for young people.

Young people develop good independence skills appropriate to their age and ability. Well organised individual plans are in place to assist young people with their independence. For example, young people are encouraged to take responsibility for keeping their bedrooms clean and tidy, cooking simple meals and budgeting. Developing these skills will better equip young people both practically and emotionally for the transition to adulthood.

Quality of care

outstanding

Young people benefit from a range of support provided to them by a committed, experienced, knowledgeable and consistent staff group. Young people enjoy strong relationships with staff and benefit from high quality care that places young people at the centre of their practice. Staff are enthusiastic, dedicated and have high aspirations and a genuine drive to help young people achieve. Staff have an unconditional positive regard for young people and respond consistently with warmth, affection and empathy. This helps young people to forge positive attachments and trusting relationships with their caregivers.

Staff benefit from regular consultation with the therapy team, this ensures that young people's social, emotional, physical and behavioural needs are identified and met. Young people benefit from individually tailored behaviour management plans that focus on positives rather than negatives. Staff encourage young people to reflect and make informed choices, this has had a positive impact on young people's ability to self-regulate their emotions and behaviour.

Young people know how to make a complaint and have been satisfied in the manner in which they have been resolved. For example, following complaints the home ensures that the matter is handled fairly, effectively and in a timely manner. Young people's wishes and feelings are sought in a variety of ways, such as key worker sessions, young people's newsletter, forums and regular house meetings. These measures ensure that young people feel that their views are important to adults and acted upon whenever possible.

Excellent collaborative practices are in place with other professionals, agencies and birth families. This ensures continuity of care and transparency in working practices. Other professionals and families comment extremely positively about the quality of the care provided by staff. One relative commented that 'if my child couldn't live with me I'd want him/her to live here. Staff are friendly and welcoming and have helped my child.' Young people are fully involved in the development of their placement plans which are individualised and specifically tailored to their needs. Placement plans are comprehensive and are updated and reviewed on a regular basis.

Staff are consistent and highly supportive of young people's educational achievements. Education plans are in place to meet the individual needs of young people. Staff support young people in completing homework and private areas are available if young people want to complete their home work in a quiet and relaxing space. Young people understand the importance of attending school and they have excellent attendance and fully engage in learning. This greatly improves their life chances as they move into adulthood.

Young people live in a comfortable, safe and well-maintained home, which is suitably located. The home is well equipped and pleasantly furnished and decorated. Bedrooms are personalised and young people say they like the way the home is furnished and they are proud of their own personal space.

Keeping children and young people safe good

The home provides a safe environment and young people confirm they feel safe. They know that staff care about them and their safety. Young people actively approach staff to discuss concerns or worries. One young person commented that 'I might not always agree with staff, but staff help me understand that boundaries are in place to keep me safe.' Bullying is not identified as an issue within the home, however staff are vigilant and observant to potential issues. Bullying is discussed in young people's meetings and key worker sessions. This ensures that young people are encouraged to participate in open dialogue should they have any concerns.

Staff recognises vulnerabilities relating to the complex needs of the young people. They are not overwhelmed when young people occasionally place themselves at risk of harm and take immediate appropriate action to ensure their safety. Serious incidents are dealt with promptly and staff respond quickly and appropriately to warning signs and triggers. For example, concerns regarding child sexual exploitation are acted upon straightaway in order to reduce the risk of potential harm. A partner agency commented that 'staff are quick to respond and are robust in their management of safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding is at the forefront of their practice.'

Staff are well trained in safeguarding practices and understand what protocols to follow during and after incidences. This protects young people who may be involved in risk taking behaviour within and outside of the home. Young people benefit from having good risk assessments that identify specific issues. Risk assessments clearly identify strategies and the responses required by staff. Consequently, levels of risk associated with incidences are reducing.

Generally, risk assessments are to a high standard, they are clear, legible and robust. Furthermore, staff have access to a range of information in relation to risks which are retained on the young person's confidential file. As part of this inspection a potential shortfall has been identified. This is in relation to newly presented risks not being consistently recorded on agreed agency formats. This could potentially lead to lack of clarity about agreed strategies.

Despite the potential shortfall within risk assessments, disruption and negative impact for young people is minimal. This is due to the robust communication across the staff group, such as daily handovers, team meetings, staff mentoring scheme and supervisions. In addition, the quality of management oversight further minimises the risks to young people.

As a result of trauma, placement disruptions and chaotic experiences young people displayed high levels of risk upon admission. The home has effective behaviour management plans for each young person and staff use creative methods to

encourage positive behaviour. For example, individual incentive plans are in place to help young people reflect and regulate their behaviour. Clear achievable goals are in place for young people and this serves as an effective reminder to help them meet their agreed targets. As a result of positive behaviour management and de-escalation techniques there has been a marked reduction in physical interventions. This further reduces levels of risk and promotes young people's safety and wellbeing.

The home has excellent working relationships with the police and safeguarding agencies. External agencies confirmed that the home maintain regular contact with them and are pro-active in seeking advice when needed. This ensures a collaborative approach to safeguarding which further protects young people from harm. Investigations into complaints are handled fairly and support both the young person and the member of staff. The home ensures that the relevant partner agencies are informed and appropriate action is taken to address any complaint/allegation. Internal investigation records are clear in relation to the outcome. However, it lacks evaluation regarding the process that has taken place. Therefore, the audit trail lacks clarity of information. Nevertheless, this has not impacted negatively on young people as their views have been listened to, acted upon and resolved.

Young people are protected by good, stringent and robust safeguarding measures which promote their safety and wellbeing. The home has a consistent staff team and effective recruitment procedures are in place for newly appointed staff. Safety checks such as fire drills and health and safety checks are routinely carried out and there are no identified risks that could cause harm to young people. The home provides a homely, safe and secure environment for young people.

Leadership and management

outstanding

The young people benefit from living in an effectively managed home. The Registered Manager is an enthusiastic, committed and passionate leader who places young people at the heart of her practice. Excellent leadership and management ensures the staff team are well trained, supported and motivated to maintain high quality care for young people. The home has strong and robust partnerships with the police, safeguarding agencies, placing authorities and health services. This ensures that young people's holistic needs are met.

The home has a comprehensive Statement of Purpose which fully supports the aims and objectives of the service. Consequently, young people, parents, placing authorities clearly know what service they can expect to receive. The development plan clearly identifies achievable goals, furthermore areas of improvement are highlighted and there is a genuine commitment to continue with service improvements.

The home is well resourced and employs a sufficient number of suitably qualified and committed staff. Staff are valued and well supported, some staff specifically asked to

work in the home due to high levels of support and the learning opportunities available within the staff team.

A mentoring scheme is available to staff and there is a clear learning culture in place which supports development. Staff have completed mandatory training courses and have the necessary skills, knowledge and ability to fulfil their role. There is a thorough induction programme in place; this enables new staff to develop the necessary skills to carry out their duties effectively and safely. Therefore, young people benefit from being cared for by well informed, suitably qualified and supported staff team.

Staff say they are extremely well supported and highly valued by their manager. They receive high quality supervision on a regular basis. Staff also benefit from monthly consultation with in-house therapist. This enables staff to reflect upon strategies, discuss behaviour management and build up their own emotional resilience.

The home makes use of high quality monitoring systems to review progress, oversee quality of care and evaluate the effectiveness of the service. For example the Registered Manager tracks progress and analyses trends via their own systems and through detailed and evaluative regulation 33 and regulation 34 reports. The Registered Manager stringently evaluates the use of sanctions and physical interventions, this ensures that the effectiveness is evaluated and the measures used are safe. Consequently, this places the welfare and wellbeing of young people at the forefront of their practice.

There were no recommendations or requirements made at the last inspection and the home have continued to demonstrate an ability for continued development.

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.