

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC008600
Inspector	Ruth Loughridge
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	New Horizons (Stockport) Ltd
Registered person address	5 Bramhall Park Road, Bramhall STOCKPORT Cheshire SK7 3DQ
Responsible individual	Bharati Parikh
Registered manager	Maria Simmons
Date of last inspection	08/01/2014

Inspection date	16/07/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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Young people benefit from good relationships with a staff team who are committed to meeting their needs. Young people understand the overall plans for their care, and, the day to day arrangements for their care are supported by individual placement plans and risk assessments.

The staff at the home work hard to keep young people safe and despite some challenging issues within the group of young people, they have the ability to implement safe working practices. These are supported by strong working relationships with placing authorities and other agencies including the police.

Not all young people fully engage with opportunities to promote their health and education. However, with support and encouragement from staff some young people attend and achieve well at school and, some young people access specialist external services to which they have been referred.

A requirement and recommendation have been made in relation to a decision to admit a young person to the home whose needs could not be met there. A requirement has also been made in relation to ensuring that, at all times, there are a sufficient number of staff on duty, as for a 3 week period, the home was staffed with less than the ratios agreed with placing authorities.

Other recommendations relate to shortfalls that have been identified in record keeping, the monitoring of the home, staff training, annual appraisals and team meetings. As the Regulation 33 visitor also provides supervision to the Registered Manager, the provider has agreed to review the arrangements to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest. A further recommendation has been made as the home did not assert the need for a statutory review, to discuss changes to arrangements for the care of a young person, with the placing authority.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/01/2014	Interim	good progress
10/05/2013	Full	adequate
27/11/2012	Interim	good progress
07/06/2012	Full	adequate

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
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times, having regard to— (a) the size of the children's home, the statement of purpose, and the number and needs (including any needs arising from any disability) of the children accommodated there a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25 (1))	29/07/2014
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to - (a) promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated there (Regulation 11 (1) (a))	29/08/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home contacts placing authorities to request statutory review: there has been a significant change in arrangements for the child's care if the placing authority has not arranged the review (25.5)
- ensure that the children's home only provides admission to children whose assessed needs they can reasonably expect to meet (11.2)
- ensure the registered person takes action to address any issues of concern they identify or which is raised with them, with particular regard to ensuring matters identified by the regulation 33 visitor are addressed (21.9)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and taken action when needed (22.1)
- ensure that training keeps staff up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, of the home (18.1)
- ensure there are suitable arrangements for professional supervision of the registered person of the agency (19.3)
- ensure staff annual appraisals take into account any views of children the service is providing for (19.6).

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Some young people have full attendance at school and they make good academic progress. Other young people make small steps of progress, however, they do not always attend education and this limits their opportunity to achieve academically and to establish good routines.

Young people are registered with primary health services which they access either independently, or with the support of staff. This promotes good health and it enables young people to develop the skills they will need to look after their own health as they approach independence. The social worker for one young person stated, 'In terms of healthy living he is not smoking and he is going to the gym. They teach him what is right and what is wrong – talking to him about health and sex and relationships and risks.' Staff work to ensure that young people have access to a range of specialist services such as CAMHS and sexual health services. Where some young people positively engage with these services, others do not and so they sometimes miss opportunities that would support their health and emotional wellbeing.

Young people benefit from well planned and agreed arrangements for contact with their families and friends. Where appropriate, staff support contact arrangements in young people's home localities which enables them to maintain their sense of belonging to their family as well as the links to their own communities. In relation to contact, one social work team manager commented, 'Ivydene were excellent in their management and support of this in both a practical manner by providing transport, but also they provided emotional support to both (name) and his mother.'

Despite the supports offered by staff and those available from external services, some young people continue to engage in behaviour that places them at risk. Other young people make very good progress from their starting points, for example they maintain abstinence from illegal drugs.

Young people are supported to develop the skills that they will need to live independently. The social worker for one young person stated, '(name) has good relationships with staff who are very supportive of his educational and emotional needs and his pathway plan for the future. They are supporting him with independence skills, they are helping him with budgeting, shopping and keeping his room clean and tidy. At present they are supporting him with ironing so he can learn this skill.'

Quality of care

good

One young person said that the staff are the best thing about the home. He commented. 'Staff are up for a laugh – they're not boring – they have time for you. They all say I'm dead funny they read my poem and they all thought it was really good.' This young person confirmed that he feels supported and that staff help him to feel good about himself.

The staff team know and understand the individual needs of the young people well. Placement plans set out young people's likes and dislikes, their needs and characteristics. They identify targets, which are understood by the young people and that link to risk assessment and rewards. One young person agrees that their personal targets motivate them and said, 'It's about respecting the house and respecting the staff. It's a good way of earning extra money and teaching you stuff for the future.'

Young people acknowledge that they have a say in the day to day running of the home. Their choices are reflected in the menus and one young person described a recent debate with staff about the purchase of some equipment which, in the end, the young people decided they did not want. Young people's rooms are personalised with their own things to their own taste and staff report that young people contribute to the choice of décor.

Young people know how to complain and when they have chosen to access the complaints procedure, the staff have responded in a timely and considerate way.

Although not all young people respond positively, staff place a strong emphasis upon the importance of education. They support young people who do engage, and they actively encourage the full engagement of those whose attendance is inconsistent. The head teacher of the school attended by one young person stated, 'We have exceptionally positive relationships with the carers and manager. Whatever we have asked of the home they have been fully supportive. If (name) has had a difficult evening they will let us know. I have nothing but positive things to say about the home.' Another professional stated, 'Staff were proactive in engaging (name) in the home's own education provision. They did an individual education plan for him and despite (name) often being reluctant to engage, they remained persistent in their efforts.'

Young people say that they enjoy going to the cinema, fishing, swimming, the gym, and going for walks. This range of activities offers opportunities for fun, relaxation, social interaction and exercise.

The staff respect the choices that young people make, and provide opportunities for young people to express their identity, in relation to culture and ethnicity. For example, one young person went shopping with staff and then prepared a meal for everyone that reflected and celebrated his tradition.

The home is clean, comfortable and is maintained to a good standard. This homely

environment is also safe. Safety at the home is supported by regular servicing and testing of gas and electrical equipment, weekly fire drills and checks of fire equipment as well as risk assessments of all areas of the property that are routinely reviewed.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people at the home indicate that they feel safe.

Discussions with the police and social workers, and records kept by the home, demonstrate that staff understand the risks associated with young people being missing from home, and, that staff take appropriate action when this occurs. Young people are reported missing in line with their individual risk assessments that are agreed with placing authorities. Although recently there has been an increase in reports of young people being missing, the majority of incidents relate to young people staying out later than their agreed times. A local police officer stated, 'I have seen the staff out looking for young people when they are missing from home – staff know where the young people are and where to find them – they are actively out seeking them.' When they return home, young people are welcomed and they receive a positive, nurturing response from staff. One young person stated, 'When I come back they ask me if I am ok and give me something to drink and eat and ask me where I've been and help me to settle.'

Young people's individual risk assessments identify potential dangers, with clear guidance on how these are to be managed. The staff work closely with placing social workers and youth offending teams to develop strategies to manage and reduce risks, and to allow young people to take appropriate risks in line with their age. The social worker for one of the young people stated, 'The home deal with situations very well – they reinforce making positive choices. The home have worked closely with me and with the youth offending team in relation to keeping (name) safe. They have really worked toward engaging him with other agencies and they have always been able to resolve issues.'

One local police officer commented, 'We have got a good relationship with the home. We patrol the area and say hello to the lads - we will come in and speak to the young people on an informal basis – staff welcome us at any time. We would describe it as a good working relationship.' This positive relationship supports the response of the staff at the home to any concerns that arise in relation to anti-social behaviour, suspected drug use and missing from home issues and so helps to ensure the safety of the young people.

Recent incidents, where young people have taken 'legal highs', has highlighted the need for staff training to enhance their knowledge and practice in this area. The home has liaised with the police and the local drugs service and is developing a strategy for one to one and group work with the young people. Literature has been

made available to young people and staff reinforce the risks through discussions with them.

Effective recruitment procedures are in place which means that all staff are vetted before starting work at the home. The induction and probationary period helps to ensure that new staff have the competence and skills in caring for young people. Staff receive training in safeguarding, however, the training for two staff members was not updated in line with the home's policy. Although there was no demonstrable negative impact, it is important that staff have the opportunity to refresh their knowledge and to keep up to date with any changes or developments in practice.

Staff have been trained in the management of behaviour which includes the use of physical intervention, and de-escalation techniques. There have been no incidents of physical intervention since before the last inspection of the home which demonstrates that staff use de-escalation techniques effectively. One external professional commented positively on how staff intervened and calmed a young person during a stressful situation. Behaviour management in the home places emphasis upon positive reward. Young people make progress against their individual targets which relate to engagement in education, developing healthy routines and keeping safe.

Leadership and management

adequate

The Registered Manager has been in post since 2007. She has previous experience of work in a range of care settings and holds the relevant qualifications to undertake the responsibilities of the role.

The home has a sufficient number suitably qualified and experienced staff. However, for a brief period, since the last inspection, staffing was reduced to below the levels in line with young people's individual placement agreements. Whilst there is no evidence to reflect a direct, negative impact upon young people, there was the potential for this.

Monitoring reports are routinely completed by both the Registered Manager and the Regulation 33 visitor. The effectiveness of the monitoring is not always evident as some themes are recurrent in monitoring reports such as improvements required in record keeping. This was apparent during the inspection, for example, documents are not routinely signed and dated. As the Regulation 33 visitor also provides supervision to the Registered Manager the arrangements do not indicate sufficient independence. The provider is therefore conducting a review to ensure that suitable arrangements are put in place.

The Registered Manager knows the young people well and her strong presence in the home helps to support staff as they undertake their day to day responsibilities caring for the young people. Although generally the Registered Manager ensures effective

partnership working with placing authorities, she did not assert the need for a statutory review when there was a significant change to the arrangements for one young person's care. This means that the arrangements for the young person's care have not been formally planned and agreed.

The inappropriate admission of one young person, whose needs the home could not reasonably have expected to meet, led to an unsettled and disrupted period before the placement was ended. The staff recognised they could not make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of that young person and those young people who were already accommodated at the home. As well as being a negative experience for the young person, staff confidence in the admission process was undermined. However, the social worker for a more recently placed young person stated, 'The staff worked with myself, the previous home and the young person in making sure there was a good transition to the home.' This demonstrates the home has taken account of, and has learned lessons from the inappropriate admission.

Staff benefit from receiving regular supervision and annual appraisals where they are able to identify training needs, receive feedback on their practice and discuss concerns. Young people's views are not sought or taken into account as part of the annual staff appraisal process. Staff meetings do not take place regularly. This is a missed opportunity to enhance the support provided to staff and to promote good communication between staff.

The home is well maintained and is comfortable and homely. As part of an ongoing programme of works, some areas of the home have been refurbished since the last inspection which enhances the facilities provided.

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.