

Children's homes inspection — Full

Inspection date	23/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC008600
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	New Horizons (Stockport) Ltd
Registered provider address	New Horizons (Stockport) Ltd, 5 Bramhall Park Road, Bramhall, STOCKPORT, Cheshire SK7 3DQ

Responsible individual	Bharati Parikh
Registered manager	Maria Simmons
Inspector	Paul Scott

Inspection date	23/11/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained 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

SC008600

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people benefit from the care and support of a stable and well-established staff team that is effectively managed by a very hands-on and visible manager. This is a key component of this home, which takes very challenging young people, and often at short notice.
- Staff have persevered and made every effort to unconditionally support each young person who has lived at this home. When young people place themselves at risk, staff are determined in their efforts to support them through this.
- Relationships between young people and staff are positive. Good use is made of these to help young people settle into a routine that enables them to re-engage in the positive aspects of life, such as education and constructive recreational activities. Most young people make some form of progress relative to their personal circumstances and time in placement.
- Young people are positive about the care and support they receive from staff. Several young people drew comparisons with other places they have lived and said that this is a good place to be, acknowledging staff as being the best thing about the home.
- Links with partner agencies and professionals are strong. These are being used effectively to ensure that safeguarding responses are robust and that, when young people's needs cannot be safely met, the right action is taken to seek alternative placements.
- A number of shortfalls have been identified at this inspection. These relate to case records, sanction records, risk assessments, regulation 44 visits, staff training, the environment and the process for challenging under-performance of external agencies.

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
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 the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and, within five days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(a)(vii)(c))	30/12/2016
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which are kept up to date. This is with specific reference to ensuring that records are maintained in accordance with the home's policies and procedures. (Regulation 36(1)(a))	30/12/2016
When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person if they consent to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. This is with specific reference to improving the level of consultation with children, parents and professionals. (Regulation 44(2)(a))	30/12/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure a homely environment is maintained throughout the house, paying specific attention to redecorating those areas of the home that are in need of improvement, in particular children's bedrooms. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- Formalise the procedure for challenging the placing authority, or any other relevant person, when they do 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. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality

standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)

- Ensure staff are able to support children in the strategies to manage their risks by making sure that, when risk assessments are reviewed, strategies are amended to reflect the change in the child's level of risk. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.10)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. This is with specific reference to ensuring that all staff complete or update training in relation to restraint, the management of self-harm and child sexual exploitation. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a one of a number of privately run children's homes. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children and young people who may be experiencing emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
11/08/2015	Full	Good
09/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
16/07/2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Staff work in a determined way to deliver a programme of individualised care and support that provides young people with opportunities to improve their lives. They work hard to develop and maintain positive relationships which underpin the culture and ethos of the home. For many young people, this has provided them with a sense of belonging and a period of stability in their often chaotic lives. The majority of young people accept the help on offer and make good progress relative to their starting point and time in placement. The current group of young people speak very positively about their care experiences and the efforts that staff go to, to help them find a stable platform on which to plan for the future. An independent reviewing officer said, '(Name) has done really well. (Name) will always be a concern because he is a very complex and challenging young man. He has been there a long time and staff have really stuck by him and have done well with him. I can see lots of progress including a big reduction in serious incidents. I think they get the right balance and are doing everything they can.' The home provides a variety of short-, medium- and long-term placements for young people, many of whom have very few options available to them prior to admission. The manager makes every effort to ensure young people's needs are matched to the existing group and the impact of the new admission is minimised. Staff are resilient and show a genuine commitment to each young person, even when their behaviour is at its most challenging and unsafe. They make every effort to help young people to safely manage and change their behaviour, with varying degrees of success. For example, a number of young people have made successful transitions to foster care or returned home to live with their families. Alternatively, a small number of placements have had to be closed due to the escalation in risk-taking behaviour. When this need arises, the manager is quick to involve the relevant services and placing authority in order to achieve as much of a planned transition as possible. Young people's care is generally well planned and clearly focuses on their individuality. Their views are routinely gathered as part of the care planning process and they are encouraged to make choices about the day-to-day running of the home. Good working partnerships are maintained with a range of care, health, education and safeguarding professionals and agencies. These are generally well used to ensure young people get maximum benefit from their time spent at the home and receive the input and support they require to meet their needs and help keep them safe. Any gaps in the service are challenged by the manager. However, because there is no formal time-scaled process to escalate concerns, matters are not always addressed in an expedient manner. For example, one young person,	

who had transferred from another of the organisation's homes, had not had a placement planning meeting, despite being in placement for 10 days. There is evidence that the manager has chased this with the social worker on a number of occasions but it has not escalated to higher levels within the placing authority.

Staff recognise and promote the importance of education and training.

Individualised arrangements are in place with a number of young people attending community-based schools and colleges. Some young people attend the in-house education programme which is delivered by qualified tutors. This is used effectively to help young people re-engage in education, often following substantial periods of absence. This helps young people establish some level of routine and work towards recognised accreditations while alternative placements are being sourced. One young person said, 'I never went to my other school but I go here. I like how I am given the time I need to learn and get on really well with the staff.'

Young people are encouraged to make the right choices and maintain healthy lifestyles. They are supported to attend routine health appointments and levels of engagement improve over time. Staff provide them with age-appropriate information and guidance. This helps them to understand the importance of healthy eating, taking regular exercise and the consequences of risk-taking behaviour such as smoking, alcohol and substance misuse. Despite staff advice and focused work, a few young people continue to occasionally drink alcohol and smoke cannabis, although this type of risk-taking behaviour is decreasing. On such occasions, risk assessments are followed ensuring young people are given the right level of support to keep them safe. When necessary, referrals to substance misuse services are made ensuring young people and staff receive the right level of support.

Young people are encouraged to engage in purposeful and age-appropriate activities. Each young person is given a weekly budget which they can use to pay for activities in the community. Young people are encouraged to develop their hobbies and interests. For example, one young person is learning to play the bass guitar, which he demonstrated for the inspector. Another spoke about his interest in art and how staff make sure that there are resources available for him.

Staff recognise the importance of young people maintaining contact with people who are important to them. Staff ensure that safe and well-planned contact is maintained in accordance with each young person's plans.

Young people are encouraged to develop age-appropriate independence. This is risk assessed with levels of autonomy being agreed with the placing authority, relative to the young person's overarching care plan and pre-disposing risk factors. Good opportunities are provided for young people to develop basic life skills such as cooking, budgeting and travelling independently, for example. The home has an annex which provides a good resource for young people to learn how to live with reduced support, although it is not currently being used for this purpose.

Young people benefit from living in a large, comfortable house which provides ample space for both private time and family living. They make good use of the resources on offer, in particular the extensive private grounds. For example, during the inspection young people and staff could be seen enjoying a game of 'hide and go seek'. Overall, the environment is well-maintained and decorated and furnished to a reasonably good standard. However, some areas are looking tired and are in need of redecoration, in particular one young person's bedroom.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people are protected from harm by staff who are trained in safeguarding. Most young people come to the home with established risk-taking behaviours. This includes criminal activity, sexually harmful behaviour, alcohol and substance misuse, self-harm and going missing from home. Staff demonstrate a good insight into each young person's behaviour risks and vulnerabilities. They are consistent in their implementation of carefully considered strategies, which are outlined in their individual plans and risk assessments. Levels of risk are reviewed regularly and records are updated, in particular when any emerging concerns arise or levels of risk increase. However, these documents are not always changed when young people's risk-taking behaviours decrease or subside, which is the case for many young people, in particular those who have lived at the home for a considerable length of time. This means that there is potential for disproportionate responses to the management of certain types of behaviour. A number of young people have presented serious concerns in terms of placing themselves and others at risk through going missing from home. This has tested staff who were constantly responding to this type of behaviour over the summer months. During this period, staff have demonstrated high levels of resilience and determination. In all cases, missing from care protocols have been followed and there is evidence of a strong multi-agency approach to securing a safe return as quickly as possible. Staff have gone to great lengths to locate young people when they have gone missing. For example, they have travelled considerable distances to undertake searches and complete welfare checks in the young person's home area. Staff talk to young people about the inherent risks and make every effort to break this cycle. On a number of occasions this has not been effective. In these instances the manager has requested multi-agency meetings and, where necessary, has served notice on placements. As a result, there has been a significant decrease in this type of behaviour over recent months and young people are much safer as a result.	

Group dynamics and behaviour are managed well. Staff take a patient and non-confrontational approach to managing young people's behaviour, which can at times be exceedingly challenging. They make good use of the strong relationships they have with young people and the de-escalation techniques they have acquired through behaviour management training. Young people generally respond positively to this approach, which means that the need for physical intervention is extremely rare. On the four occasions that it has been used, it has been done sensitively and in a proportionate and caring manner.

Staff responses to negative behaviour are both proportionate and fair. Young people confirm that staff talk to them about their behaviour and give them opportunities to make amends and put things rights. This helps young people reflect and develop pro-social behaviour. One young person said, 'The rules are clear and we all know what they are. When we break them we should expect a consequence. It is never overboard and is always fair when staff give you sanctions. They help you understand what you have done wrong, which helps you to change. The help is there if you want it.' Records of sanctions are maintained. However, a number of these records did not include confirmation that the child had been spoken to or that the manager had evaluated the effectiveness of the sanction.

There have been two unsubstantiated allegations made against staff since the last inspection. Feedback from the local authority designated officer (LADO) confirms that these allegations have been fully investigated in line with the local authority and home's procedures. They raised no concerns about any aspects of the home's safeguarding practice confirming that the manager will often seek and follow advice in a timely manner. This ensures that the local authority are aware of any emerging concerns and are confident that they are being addressed in an open and transparent way.

Staff retention is exceedingly good. Two new staff have been employed since the last full inspection to complement this stable and experienced staff team. Rigorous assessments and checks are undertaken prior to staff starting work. This ensures that they have the necessary qualities to work with this challenging group of young people and that they are safe to do so.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The manager, who is suitably qualified and experienced, has been registered with Ofsted since April 2008. She is well supported by an experienced and stable staff team, who describe her as a very hands-on manager who is highly visible, in particular when young people are at their most challenging. She has good	

relationships with the young people who confirm that she is always available if they need her. One young person said, 'The manager is sound. You can ask her anything and she will do her best to sort it for you.'

Suitable action has been taken to address the one requirement and two recommendations from the interim inspection in February 2016. This has resulted in improvements to some of the content of regulation 44 reports and restraint records, and increased access to advocacy services for young people.

Young people benefit from the care and support of a very competent and experienced staff team. The majority of staff have been together for a considerable amount of time. This helps them to work in a well-coordinated way that enables them to manage this complexly diverse and challenging group of teenagers. They show a resilient determination in ensuring each young person's needs, safety and well-being are fully promoted. Handovers and team meetings are used effectively to ensure their responses to young people are current and relevant. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the good management of young people's presenting behaviour, which includes a multi-agency response to managing known and emerging risks.

Peer support is an extremely strong component of this staff team. Staff confirm that they are well supported in their day-to-day role and that they benefit from regular formal supervision that enables them to reflect upon and develop their practice. All staff have their performance appraised annually, which includes feedback from young people and professionals. There is a reasonably good focus on professional development with a range of training opportunities being made available to them. This includes mandatory training such as safeguarding, first aid and the use of physical intervention, as well as needs-led training such as the management of self-harm or child sexual exploitation. Due to the need to focus on the behaviour of young people, some aspects of training have been allowed to drift. Consequently, not all staff are currently up to date in relation to all mandatory and needs-led training.

The manager has a good understanding of what the home does well. She uses a range of auditing processes to monitor the home's performance and makes every effort to address identified shortfalls and to improve young people's experiences and progress. This is further enhanced by the improved scrutiny that is offered by the independent visitor, whose reports now include their assessment of how effectively young people are safeguarded and how their well-being is promoted. This process would benefit from a more consistent approach to gathering and representing stakeholder views, in particular those of young people and professionals, which are consistently under-represented in the independent visitor's reports.

Keyworkers take responsibility for ensuring their keychild's files are well organised and that information pertaining to their needs, experiences and progress are kept

up to date. While staff are generally diligent in ensuring documents are updated, this information is not always transferred from the computer into the young person's file. This was evident during the inspection when a number of records had to be printed off for the purpose of the inspection. These files are used as working documents by staff and, therefore, it is essential that the information within is kept up to date and that the files provide an accurate picture of each young person's 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 '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 that 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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