

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	11 April 2016
Unique reference number	SC010699
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Dawnette Legister
Inspector	Barnaby Dowell

Inspection date	11 April 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Declined in 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	Requires improvement??
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC010699

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people are happy in the home and reduce risk-taking behaviours such as absconding and offending.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture supported by good multi-agency working and supportive relationships with young people.
- Managers have implemented improvements to case recordings and regular key work sessions, evidencing progress more clearly.
- Staff engage young people creatively, recently using music lyrics to encourage the expression of emotions. This resulted in the reduction of anger outbursts.
- Risk assessments are thorough and comprehensive, giving clear guidance to staff. This supports a consistent response from staff and keeps young people safe.
- Despite a programme of work to develop independence skills being initiated, this requires development and further exploration of budgeting and cooking exercises.
- Despite extensive staff efforts, young people are not presently accessing full-time education. This has restricted development and access to opportunities outside of the home.
- The home does not conduct life story work. Consequently, young people do not have access to mementos and photos of their placement.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

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

- Introduce an album of pictures and mementos of time in the placement. This will help the development of life story work for young people and enable them to have a greater understanding of their history ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.14).
- Assist each young person to prepare for any moves from the home, whether they are returning home, moving to another placement or adult care, or to live independently. This includes supporting the young person to develop emotional and mental resilience to cope with the home's support and, where the young person is moving to live independently, practical skills such as cooking, housework, budgeting and personal self-care ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27).
- Ensure that the registered person and staff work closely with the placing authority so that the young person is supported and enabled to resume full-time education as soon as possible. The focus should be on the provision of support to sustain or regain confidence in education and engagement in suitable structured activities ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 27, paragraph 5.5).

Full report

Information about this children's home

- A private provider owns and operates this home. The registered manager is also the registered provider. The home provides care for five young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
2 December 2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
7 July 2015	Full	Good
5 March 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
29 May 2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
An individualised approach to care is paramount in this home. For many, the quiet location offers respite from previous gang affiliations. One young person commented, 'It's cool in this house. They treat you good. I think I have chilled out and matured here.' Young people enjoy positive relationships with all staff and feel safe. Young people settle quickly in the home and there is good plan of induction. Staff focus on establishing a solid and secure attachment by supportive and regular key-work sessions. Establishment of trust occurs in small steps, such as performing household errands and returning with the correct change. The focus of managers is to allow staff to think outside of the box to help young people. Young people benefit from key working formally and informally, both inside and outside of the home.. One session recently encouraged the use of poetry to express emotion. This resulted in improved self-control and reduced anger outbursts. Staff use individual areas of expertise to access new and exciting opportunities, for example attending drama workshops. Young people are not presently accessing education. This is despite the provision of daily planners and numerous attempts to provide formal and informal constructive opportunities by staff. One social worker commented, 'My young man spends much of his morning in bed, despite being offered a daily plan.' Consequently, young people are not making appropriate educational progress and daily routines are lacking in structure. The culture of the home is suffering. Despite this, outcomes for young people remain positive. One young person has successfully moved from the home since the interim inspection. His social worker commented, 'Thank you for all your hard work in ensuring a smooth transition.' A programme of independence work is now in place. This offers more structure to work on social skills, cooking, budgeting and the exploration of culture and background. As a result young people's self-confidence has risen. The programme remains limited in scope and requires development. This limits progress information and may result in ill-informed care planning decisions. A programme of life story work is lacking. Consequently, young people do not have an ongoing record of their achievements and mementos and are unable to put the progress made in placement into context.	

The home prioritises healthy living. Staff participate in gym sessions with young people and routinely offer physical activities such as attending a local basketball club. This supports improved self-esteem and promotes positive relationships with staff. For example some young have gained a healthier weight.

Participation is encouraged, and advocacy routinely offered. Care plans accurately reflect the wishes and feelings of young people and their aims and objectives. Regular residents meetings seek to plan menus and activities; subsequently young people feel empowered and heard.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
There is a strong safeguarding culture in the home. Staff liaise well with key professionals to support multi-agency risk assessments. Staff use trusting relationships with young people to facilitate open and trusting communication with them. When concerns arise, staff seek appropriate advice from the local authority. Staff recently supported enhanced monitoring of a social media account and the making of an abduction order to safeguard one young person. One social worker commented, 'The home is first to tell if something is going wrong. They are sharp.' Young people reduce risk-taking behaviours. Access to a specialist drugs worker within the home acts to limit cannabis use. There is a robust response to absconding behaviour, and risk assessments give clear guidance to staff. Managers monitor these episodes and share their evaluation with local police. This helps to support shift planning and the allocation of staffing resources more effectively. On the return of the young person, staff actively pursue the provision of independent return to care interviews to offer full support to them. Staff facilitate safe contact for young people where appropriate. This supports peer and family relationships for young people and reduces incidents of missing behaviour. Partnership work with parents remains prioritised when appropriate. There is no use of restraint in the home. Staff emphasise the earning of privileges and set goals and objectives. Young people respond well. The home is a safe environment. Activities are risk assessed thoroughly and staff consider possible concerns involving gang-related issues. All statutory checks are completed and regularly reviewed. The environmental health authority recently awarded a five-star rating for cleanliness.	

Young people enjoy safe access to the internet in the home. Controls over the internet provision stop any access to inappropriate websites from the home. Key work records show staff advising and guiding young people over the dangers presented by the internet and social media..

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The management arrangements in the home are effective. The registered manager and homeowner remains supported by her son and daughter as deputies. She has been in post since the opening of the home and is completing her level five diploma qualification with her deputies; this is due to be completed by the end of the year. All three enjoy a long-standing working relationship and assist in promoting the family-style atmosphere. The registered manager commented, 'We work off each other and know our strengths, and this helps the running of the house.' Managers lead by example and are a consistent presence in the home. They have established connections with local youth services. The staff and young people have a mutual respect for the management team. A new independent visitor offers challenge and rigorous monthly scrutiny. This has supported the home in addressing all of the requirements and recommendations outlined in the interim inspection. She is supporting the home in implementing improvements to case recording and care plans. This now offers a clearer picture of the progress made by young people and informs care-planning decisions. A plan for service improvement is in place, resulting in the introduction of a new staff induction plan and improved, safer recruitment processes. This promotes the development of the home while safeguarding young people. Managers adopt an open and reflective approach. Staff meetings act as a forum for consistently reviewing and assessing the progress of young people. Staff recently assisted in the introduction of a new behavioural management policy. This allows the home to develop with the input of all professionals and improves multi-agency working. The morale of the staff team remains high. Young people benefit from being cared for by a permanent group of staff. The use of agency staffing is minimal. Staff recognise the positive changes made in the home since the last inspection. Managers have adjusted the shift pattern for staff, limiting the length of shifts. Staff report feeling less tired with increased motivation to engage with young people.	

Staff say they feel motivated by recent training and state that supervision is regular and valued. A programme of appraisals has begun in the home. All care staff are currently completing their level three qualifications. A private provider and the local authority provide training and recently covered the risks of young people being sexual exploited. One staff member commented, 'That session really helped to put behaviours into context.'

The home has an updated statement of purpose. The children's guide is an informative and useful document that clearly sets out the expectations that the home has of the young people, as well as informing them of all the things that they can expect from the home.

Managers ensure rigorous assessment of admissions to the home. At present, given the vulnerability of the current young people, emergency admissions are not accepted. Managers request full documentation from placing authorities, thereby ensuring a full impact assessment on the home. When placements are not progressing, prompt liaison with professionals limits any possible drift or delay for young people.

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 whom 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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