

SC011972

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately operated children's home. It is registered for up to six children and young people. Currently, only boys are accommodated. The home specialises in caring for children and young people who have experienced trauma in their lives and may exhibit some behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 10 to 11 January 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 21 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Care planning is thorough. Staff are meticulous in recording data to produce a 'dimensions of need' document that identifies the immediate and ongoing support that is required. Staff pay careful attention to children's and young people's emotional well-being, such as by providing additional support when children or young people approach painful anniversaries.
- Staff are attuned to the needs of the children and young people, for example by interpreting their responses to keeping themselves safe online. As a result of

their careful attention, staff recognise the need for further assessment. Children and young people receive the supplementary specialist support that they need.

- Children and young people are involved in writing their individual behaviour support plans. This maximises the chance of success. Physical intervention is minimal. There is no criminal offending or being missing from care.
- Staff are aware of, and follow, the comprehensive safeguarding policy. They work with other professionals to keep everyone safe in the event of a concern. Staff communicate well, making use of digital apps on smartphones. They keep the placing social workers updated on any significant issues, as well as through their regular reports.
- Staff maintain the dignity and respect of children and young people, especially concerning sensitive health issues. They prepare children and young people for health appointments that children and young people may find difficult.
- Children and young people are in school or college. They enjoy their education experience and make progress. They now access a school closer to the home.
- Staff support children and young people to think about the wider community, such as by raising funds to support a children's hospice.
- Staff ensure that children and young people see the adults who are important to them, including their brothers or sisters. They provide supervision, if necessary.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The fire risk assessment for the premises does not include precautions for the newly erected cabin in the garden.
- Not all children's and young people's case records contain their immunisation status.
- Staff have not challenged the quality of a personal education plan or the need for an education psychologist's assessment.
- Some language in restraint records does not accurately describe the presenting behaviour, and there is no formal broad analysis of all restraint that occurs over a period of time.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/03/2017	Full	Good
22/08/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
15/03/2016	Full	Good
12/08/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment in the children's home. (Regulation 25(1)(a)) In particular, this refers to precautions for the cabin in the garden.	28/03/2018
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. (Regulation 36(1)(a)) In particular, this refers to immunisation records.	28/03/2018

Recommendations

- Staff must challenge the child's education or training provider if the child does not receive sufficient support to progress as outlined in their relevant plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.11)

In particular, this refers to the quality of the personal education plan and the timescale for an education psychologist's assessment.

- Records of restraint must be kept and should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

In particular, ensure that the language in reports reflect the specific behaviour and that there is a broad oversight and analysis of all restraints.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people make progress in their education, health and emotional well-being. Staff work with other professionals to help children and young people to understand why they are in care. Staff are attuned to the emotional needs of children and young people. For example, as they approach the anniversary of the death of a family member, they work with the child or young person to explore their difficult and painful feelings and the healthy ways that they can process them. They encourage children and young people to engage with therapy that is best suited to their needs, such as play therapy. One statutory report stated, 'It is impressive (name) has agreed to work with the clinical psychologist.' Some children and young people with a history of self-injurious behaviour no longer self-harm. A placing social worker said, '(Name) is well looked after. Staff are much attuned to his needs.'

Children and young people are in good health. Staff support them to keep routine appointments, as well as explaining when and why specialist help is required. They are discrete in supporting children and young people with sensitive health needs. Children and young people are confident that staff assure their dignity and privacy at all times. Staff follow the medication procedures so that children and young people have the right medication at the right time.

A particular strength of the home is the approach to education. All children and young people are in school or college. The organisation has been successful in opening a school nearer the home, thereby significantly reducing the journey time. Children and young people enjoy their learning and have plans for what they would like to do in the future. Some young people say that they want a future placement near their college when they leave the home so that they can continue their education. A statutory report stated, '(Name) has made some real achievements, the cookery prize, becoming house captain and 100% attendance.'

Children and young people enjoy seeing others who are important to them, such as their brothers or sisters and stepparents. Staff provide the necessary support, including supervision if necessary. Children and young people have a private telephone room where they can make calls to other agencies if they wish.

Children and young people enjoy their independence, commensurate with their age. Staff listen to their requests, such as wishing to spend time with friends in the local community. Children and young people agree the boundaries with staff and, in the main, they adhere to them. This means that they develop social skills that will be of lifetime use. They listen to staff as well as the local police community support officer to keep themselves safe and away from criminal offending.

Staff encourage children and young people to think of others at the home. They use a 'kindness jar', which children and young people fill with pompoms, as rewards for kind acts. All children and young people share in the reward. The system generates a positive

community spirit, with politeness and manners being the norm. Staff encourage children and young people to consider others in the wider community. For example, staff supported them to raise funds for a children's hospice. Staff help children and young people to think about topical issues, such as tragic events in the national news. They help children and young people to think about how communities come together in such circumstances.

Children and young people enjoy a wide range of stimulating and meaningful activities, including swimming, football, visiting the local park and going to the nearby youth group. Boredom is not an option at the home. Children and young people can select something to do from the 'I am bored' jar. This gives them an activity to stimulate their thinking and creativity.

Children and young people have a voice. They have a regular meeting at which they can contribute to the agenda of the staff meeting. As well as daily dialogue with staff, they have regular meetings with their key worker, which they find helpful. They are able to ask questions and explore issues such as their cultural identity.

Staff encourage children and young people to develop independence skills according to their age. They tidy their rooms and assist with the laundry or washing dirty dishes. Young people approaching adulthood speak positively about the future, while addressing their anxieties with staff.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Staff promote positive behaviour, using personal targets for children and young people and a points system. Children and young people engage enthusiastically with the process, looking forward to receiving their incentives for positive conduct. Children and young people learn the consequences of negative behaviour while also being rewarded for good behaviour.

Children and young people help to write their individual behaviour support plans. They demonstrate good insight into their emotions. They identify what might trigger them to behave poorly and agree with the staff what interventions are best. Staff do not have to use physical intervention frequently. On occasion, staff use a sanction related to what the child or young person has done, for example repayment for a household item that the child or young person has broken. Behaviour is excellent, with no criminal offending or being missing from care.

Staff use the therapeutic model that the home has adopted to keep children and young people emotionally safe. They use key-working sessions effectively to explore with children and young people how they are feeling about themselves. A play therapist undertakes regular individual work with children and young people. They are being enabled to express themselves in a safe environment. Staff utilise the team meeting with the clinical psychologist to discuss the underlying reasons for behaviour and agree strategies. These are successful. Children and young people develop emotional resilience.

Bullying is not an identified issue. Staff are on hand to explain events to children and young people who find it hard to interpret social situations. Children and young people are accepting of each other and their differences or preferences. They develop a social and emotional intelligence that will last a lifetime.

Staff keep children and young people as safe as possible in the cyber world. They are extremely attentive to any possible indicators that a child or young person is at risk. Staff react to any emerging concerns, taking swift action if necessary. On one occasion, staff have involved the police, who have offered words of advice to the young person. Staff continue to reflect on why a child or young person has made themselves vulnerable. In one case, this has resulted in further professional assessment and diagnosis.

Safeguarding professionals train staff in good practice. Staff are clear on the procedures to follow in various scenarios. The registered manager liaises with the local authority designated officer in the event that there is a concern about practice. The registered manager keeps excellent records of investigations and the decision-making process, including referral to other agencies.

The risk assessment process is excellent. Staff ensure that the assessments are succinct and updated. Risk-reduction strategies are successful. The registered manager has reviewed the location risk assessment, as recommended at the last inspection. Staff are not risk adverse and allow the children and young people to take risks like any other person of the same age, for example access to the local park. Staff complete body maps that they link to accident reports to explain any marks on a child or young person as the result of an everyday activity.

Children live in a safe environment with all necessary health and safety certification in place. They take part in regular fire drills so that they know how to evacuate in an emergency. The fire risk assessment identifies hazards and the risk reduction methods. However, it does not formally record the agreed strategies for the newly erected cabin in the garden. Children and young people are not at immediate risk, as all are aware of the emergency procedures.

The registered manager adopts safer recruitment practice and employs adults deemed to be suitable to work with children and young people.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has been successful in recruiting a staff team. She deploys them to meet the individual needs of the children and young people. This currently includes waking night staff to provide support for any child or young person struggling at night, for example experiencing night terrors. Children and young people are confident that they have adults around them whom they can trust and turn to when they are experiencing difficult emotions.

The registered manager monitors staff training closely. She ensures that staff have

refresher training where necessary. She arranges for bespoke training to match the needs of the children and young people, for example autism training, as recommended at the previous inspection. She discusses training and practice in the regular staff supervisions. Staff speak highly of their training and feel well equipped to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care.

Staff communicate exceptionally well. They use traditional methods such as a communication book, in addition to modern technology such as a shared app on a smartphone. Staff have ready access to the most up-to-date and key information on every occasion that they work at the home. Placing social workers speak highly of the level of communication. Staff keep them informed on a regular basis and immediately advise of any significant incidents. A placing social worker said, 'The written reports to the statutory review are comprehensive.'

Staff report a good relationship with the local police. A community support officer comes to the home and gives advice, for example around criminal damage in the local community. Adults warn children and young people of the dangers of becoming involved in such activity. Children and young people living at this home are not committing criminal offences. As one member of staff stated, 'We do not want to put out fires all the time. We are proactive. We get young people to think through the consequences of such actions.'

Staff challenge the work of some other professionals, such as the accuracy of statutory review minutes. However, they do not always challenge other records or agreed actions, for example the quality of personal education plans or delay in arranging an education psychological assessment. In one example, the support that is required at school and whether an education psychologist assessment is still needed were unclear.

The registered manager or team managers review restraint records and sign them off as proportionate and appropriate. However, they do not always question the description of the reason for the use of the restraint, for example what 'lashing out' or 'was aggressive' actually mean. There is no written formal system to review restraints on a broader level over a period of time to check for patterns or trends. Such shortfalls compromise the accuracy and validity of the monitoring of this practice.

Staff work well together. They speak highly of each other and the registered manager. There is a real sense of cohesion, with all staff knowing and working together to achieve positive outcomes for the children and young people. A member of staff said, 'We are always looking for ways to improve the outcomes of the young people.' Another member of staff said, 'We have a strong and dedicated staff who support the young people and each other in their development.'

Children and young people live in a warm, comfortable home. They personalise their rooms, giving them a sense of identity and belonging. The registered manager has made substantial improvements to the environment through the addition of a cabin in the garden, used for gym equipment and therapy sessions. Key staff keep placement plans up to date. The plans are succinct and clearly guide staff

on the children's and young people's needs. Staff are diligent at recording data that is analysed to inform future care planning. However, staff do not routinely record the vaccinations of each child and young person. This is not in strict accordance with the regulations. The registered manager ensures that pathway plans are in place for young people as they approach adulthood. Young people have a clear voice, stating what they want to happen in the future, including where they want to live.

The registered manager works well with others. She takes the independent visitor's report seriously, acting on any recommendations. She notifies significant events to relevant agencies, including Ofsted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC011972

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Turnpike Gate House, Alcester Heath, Alcester B49 5JG

Responsible individual: Mark Birkbeck

Registered manager: Rachel Burgess

Inspector:

Keith Riley, social care inspector

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