

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC022447
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Nugent Care
Registered person address	Nugent Care Society 99 Edge Lane, Edge Hill LIVERPOOL L7 2PE
Responsible individual	Robert Norman Lunan
Registered manager	Marie Theresa Higgins
Date of last inspection	13/03/2014

Inspection date	12/06/2014
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Previous inspection	inadequate progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The home provides personalised, well-planned care to highly vulnerable young people with challenging needs. It prioritises young people's individual and diverse needs. It effectively promotes good outcomes for young people, who make good progress in most areas of development.

Young people feel safe and well supported. They build trusting relationships with staff. They feel cared for by the dedicated and consistent staff team. Clear boundaries support young people to develop improved self-control and improved interpersonal relationships.

Managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the home and are effective at securing improvements to the service. The leadership and management arrangements are being further strengthened. This enables greater monitoring and review of practice as well as improved support and guidance to the staff team.

Shortfalls identified at the last inspection have been addressed. Some staff need further training to ensure their knowledge and skills remain up to date and relevant. There are improvements in the quality of records but these do not fully demonstrate the good work undertaken by the home. There are some shortfalls in communication with parents. This does not help parents to feel fully involved in their

child's life.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a voluntary organisation. It provides accommodation for a maximum of seven young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The home provides transition placements for three young people moving on from the adjacent secure children's home. It also provides longer term care for four young people.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/03/2014	Interim	inadequate progress
11/07/2013	Full	good
17/10/2012	Interim	satisfactory progress
12/06/2012	Full	adequate

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):

- ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future (NMS 22.5)
- ensure that the home notifies parents within 24 hours of the occurrence of significant events in accordance with Regulation 30 (2), unless to do so is not reasonably practicable or would place the child at risk (NMS 24)
- ensure that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and the purpose of the setting. In particular, ensure staff are fully trained to support the safe use of the internet and social media as well as to meet the needs of children who self-harm, are sexually exploited and misuse substances. (NMS 18.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Some young people make very good progress in their emotional development. Over time, their confidence, self-esteem and emotional resilience all improve. They reduce their self-harming and anti-social behaviour. They begin to form attachments with staff and others. This prepares them for future relationships. It helps them to develop the social skills they need to interact positively and effectively with others. Young people say the support they receive from staff is the best thing about the home.

All young people benefit from having strong and supportive relationships with staff. They begin to share their worries and concerns with staff and this helps them to reflect on dangerous, risk-taking behaviour. Some young people reduce this behaviour. However, some revert to long-standing, risk-taking behaviour. For example, they go missing from home. They engage in high risk behaviour that endangers their sexual and physical health. The home takes action to work swiftly and closely with the young people and other agencies to protect these young people as far as possible.

Young people's physical and mental health needs are mostly well met. They receive medical treatment and advice promptly. They benefit from engaging with a range of specialist health professionals. Young people understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and take responsibility for their own health. Some follow a special diet and receive advice and support from experts as well as staff. They increasingly partake of a healthy diet. Some young people continue to smoke cigarettes and misuse substances when they are missing from home, despite knowing the dangers to their long-term health.

Young people contribute to the home through planning, decision-making and participating in day to day activities. They are fully involved in decisions about their own care. They develop their interests and talents by engaging in purposeful and enjoyable leisure activities both in the home and in the community. This increases their health and self-esteem. For example they develop skills in music, technology and physical activity, in line with their particular and individual interests.

Young people make good progress in their education. They respond well to individually tailored packages of education delivered by qualified teachers and teaching assistants. Young people improve their life chances by making the most of the learning opportunities provided, including additional tuition for national examinations. They speak with pride about their achievements and are positive about the future.

Young people learn life skills such as gardening and renovating furniture as well as cooking and working together. They develop skills that prepare them for independent

living. Those who are moving on to new placements are well supported to engage positively with the new placement following their assessment in the home. As a result, they are well prepared for the future. One social worker said, 'I feel that the young person has lots of support and is being appropriately prepared for her transition back to the community.'

Quality of care

good

Professionals who work alongside the home to support the young people speak very highly of the quality of care. One said, 'I can't praise them enough. They are absolutely amazing'. Professionals and young people recognise that staff go the extra mile to help young people to turn their lives around. A young person said, 'It's like a real home, not a kid's home. The staff listen to you. They try their best to help you'.

Young people say they feel cared for by the staff team and can talk to any member of staff when they feel low. They are relaxed and comfortable in the home. They know how to make a complaint and there is evidence of their views being taken seriously and acted upon to improve the quality of care. For example, young people have suggested the premises be used in a different way and this suggestion has been explored and agreed by senior managers. Young people are engaged in a project to improve the garden. This helps them develop new skills and a sense of achievement.

Contact arrangements are clear and families are made welcome at the home. Equality and diversity is very well promoted so that young people become increasingly comfortable with their identity and speak openly with staff about their background and families.

The home liaises effectively with other agencies including placing authorities, the police and health services. This promotes the sharing of information and sound, timely decision making. The home challenges placing authorities appropriately when plans for young people are unclear or raise concerns. It ensures that young people are effectively represented through independent advocacy.

Keeping children and young people safe

good

Young people live in houses that are physically safe and secure. For example the home stores dangerous items safely in accordance with risk assessments. Young people know what to do in the event of a fire. This promotes their awareness of danger and their safety in the home. The home is well maintained and provides comfortable living accommodation. Opportunities for young people to self-harm are minimised by attention to the safety of the premises and staff vigilance in their supervision of young people.

Young people have a strong sense of safety and well-being in the home. They say the rules are fair, they feel safe and they know that staff try hard to keep them safe.

The home has strong relationships with the police and safeguarding authorities. Staff act swiftly and proactively to protect young people when they go missing from home. For example, they search for young people, maintain contact with them and encourage them to return. They work effectively with other agencies to secure young people's safe return. They support young people to speak to an independent person about the reasons for going missing and they encourage young people to stay safe in the community.

Young people with a long history of going missing have returned to the home voluntarily. This demonstrates they feel safe and secure at the home. Managers take action promptly to meet with placing and safeguarding authorities when young people continue to engage in high risk activities despite the home's interventions. They review the appropriateness of the placement without delay. This deters young people from becoming entrenched in unsafe activity.

Individual risk management plans identify risks to young people. These are kept up to date and demonstrate the level of risk to young people associated with each risk-taking behaviour or activity. Most risk assessments are well recorded. They guide staff in how to manage risk-taking behaviour based on a clear assessment. The home enables young people to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development.

Staff follow individual behaviour management strategies which are agreed in placement plans and regularly reviewed. These support young people to improve their skills in managing conflict. They reduce the level of challenging behaviour over time. Restraint is appropriately but rarely used. This gives young people confidence in the staff team.

Staff set consistent boundaries and maintain them even when young people rail against them. They provide a safe and secure setting where young people know what is acceptable behaviour. Over time, it leads to the development of trusting, open and influential relationships with young people.

Leadership and management

good

The registered manager has managed the home for seven years. She manages both this home and the secure children's home on the same site. She is an experienced and knowledgeable child care practitioner. She is qualified to NVQ Level 4 in the management of a children's home and the care of children and young people. The registered manager is ably assisted by the deputy manager and well supported by a strong management team.

Since the last interim inspection, the home has reviewed and further strengthened its management arrangements. It is currently in transition. The deputy manager has taken on more responsibility for managing the home. She intends to apply to be registered as manager within the next three months. The current registered manager maintains a strategic overview of both homes and a focus on driving improvement.

The manager regularly shares changes in legislation and practice developments with the staff team. This improves their knowledge and ensures they are up to date with changes in the sector and in particular, with reports on missing children and those at risk of sexual exploitation. This supports them to keep their practice up to date and promotes continuous improvement.

The home has addressed the shortfalls identified at the interim inspection in March 2014. As a result, the quality of care and outcomes for children have improved. The home demonstrates good capacity for continuous improvement. Managers have taken action that has enhanced the service provided and have clear plans for further development. For example, the staffing arrangements between this home and the secure children's home have been reviewed so that young people receive more consistent care that meets their needs better. The demand on staff to provide assistance in the secure children's home has significantly reduced. This has enabled greater opportunities for staff to engage with young people without disruption. It has facilitated the development of trusting relationships and attachments.

The staff team are mostly qualified and experienced in the provision of children's social care. They receive regular and effective support and supervision that assists them to deliver high quality care. Young people say this children's home is 'better than other places' and that they like it. They say staff are 'very supportive with everything'. They identify this as a key strength of the home.

A comprehensive training programme focusing on attachment and supporting young people who have experienced neglect and early trauma has begun. It is being rolled out to all staff. This is raising awareness and understanding among the staff team and is helping the team to further improve the way they interact with and support young people.

Not all staff are fully up to date with mandatory training and some have not received specialist training to help them to understand and meet the specific needs of some young people. For example, some have not had training in meeting the needs of young people who self-harm and those who misuse drugs and alcohol. This means they may not be fully equipped to manage these matters in the best possible way. However, these shortfalls are being addressed and good guidance and support for staff minimises their impact on the care of young people.

Monitoring arrangements are good. The manager of the home and the independent visitor complement each other to provide a useful, on-going overview of the

operation of the home and any shortfalls in practice. Areas for improvement are shared with the staff team at their weekly meetings. The home quickly addresses dips in practice and maintains a high quality service.

Leaders and managers are fully up to date with placement plans and on-going arrangements for individual young people. The home monitors outcomes for children well and takes action promptly to address any concerns.

Records demonstrate that young people are looked after in line with their placement plans. Records are mostly well maintained and demonstrate how the home supports young people to improve their outcomes. However, minutes of staff team meetings do not reflect the careful review of behaviour management strategies. Plans are in place to improve the layout and quality of some records to make them more informative and user-friendly.

Significant events are well reported and notified to the appropriate authorities. However, serious incidents are not always shared with parents. Although this is with the agreement of placing authorities, it undermines the confidence of parents to make effective contributions to their child's life.

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.