

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	28/04/2016
Unique reference number	SC022447
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Nugent Care
Registered person address	99 Edge Lane, Edge Hill, Liverpool L7 2PE

Responsible individual	Anne-Marie Carney
Registered manager	Susan Hatton
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd

Inspection date	28/04/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
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

SC022447

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

The quality of care is good. Overall, children have positive experiences and make good progress. They benefit from warm and friendly relationships with staff that help them to develop self-esteem and confidence. Their health and welfare are well promoted. They receive good support in preparation for future independent living. However, not all children over 16 are in employment, education or training, and this does not support them to develop the skills that they need to ensure future employability.

Children say that they feel safe in the home. Safeguarding arrangements have significantly improved since the interim inspection and are now good. Restraint is minimal. Behaviour management strategies are based on supportive relationships between staff and children, and are mostly effective. Improved arrangements have been set up to ensure that children receive an independent interview on return from being missing. However, these have not yet been tested, because children rarely go missing, and none have gone missing since the last inspection. Individual risk assessments have improved and more is being done to support children with a history of child sexual exploitation.

The leadership and management arrangements are strong. Managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the home and have a good development plan in place to promote improvement. The requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. Consequently, the overall monitoring of the operation of the home and the quality of care have improved. Staff have begun a comprehensive training programme, and are increasing their skills in supporting children at risk of sexual exploitation and domestic violence. The manager is aware that still more needs to be done to support children at risk of exploitation. This includes strengthening decision making around children's access to social media and providing more comprehensive support to children at risk of grooming and exploitation. Although records are good, shortfalls in some mean that they do not reflect the good work that the home is doing to help children to develop skills for independence. This makes it difficult for the manager to monitor children's progress effectively in all aspects of their development.

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 recommendation(s):

- Ensure that the home has proactive relationships with appropriate schools and educational support services, and ensure that arrangements for children's education are set out when a placement in the home is commissioned ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 27, paragraph 5.7).
- Work with each child's local authority's virtual school head to ensure that children and young people aged 16–18 get the support they need to participate in education or training, where they are capable of receiving it ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.17).
- Ensure that the registered manager leads and manages the team in a way that provides high-quality care for children. In particular, ensure that the manager is fully involved in assessments and decisions that impact upon children's safety, including those relating to providing a child with a mobile phone and access to social media. Ensure also that the reasons for such decisions are appropriately evidenced and recorded ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.4).
- Ensure that the registered person supports staff to be ambitious for every child in the home, and to gain skills and experience that enable them actively to support each child to fulfil their potential and to meet their needs. In particular, to support staff to develop their skills further and broaden their resources so they can better support children at risk of exploitation, and help them to develop self-esteem, self-respect and an understanding of appropriate social and sexual relationships ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.5).
- Ensure that information about a child is recorded in such a way that it will be helpful to the child. In particular, improve case records so that they demonstrate measurable progress and effective monitoring, including how the home is helping children develop their independence skills ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4).

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by a charitable organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home provides transitional placements for children moving on from the adjacent secure children's home as well as short and long-term care for children with complex emotional and behavioural needs.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28 September 2015	Full	Good
07 January 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12 June 2014	Full	Good
13 March 2014	Interim	Inadequate progress

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The quality of individualised care is good. Children are well supported and closely supervised by staff who care about them and build supportive relationships, treating them with warmth and kindness. Children with extremely complex and challenging needs learn to trust adults, and to develop self-esteem and confidence that prepare them for future independent living. The home encourages children to develop their skills and interests, and a positive outlook on life. Children enjoy a wide range of activities linked to their own interests. For example, children enjoy playing the guitar, singing, attending the gym and trampolining. They like going out with staff on shopping trips, to the beach and for meals out. They also enjoy relaxing in the home, having pamper nights with staff and watching television together. This provides children with a positive experience of living in a setting where they feel that staff care about them and are interested in them. Staff encourage them to become involved in local groups so that they can meet up with peers, but not all do. Children say that staff consult them about their own care, listen to their views and respond to their wishes wherever possible. A child described staff as 'supportive and respectful' and said that they do not need to use restraint, because they listen to children. A child who had previously complained about being woken unnecessarily during the night by night staff to monitor their sleep patterns said that this practice had now ceased. Staff confirmed that the need for such checks are risk assessed and only completed as necessary, so that children's sleep is not at risk of being disturbed. There have been no complaints since the last inspection, and children say that they are very happy with the way that staff look after them. They describe the home as 'good'. Children say they have an allocated key worker, but can approach any member of staff for support. The home records significant conversations with children. There is good evidence of discussions on a wide range of relevant topics and materials pertinent to each individual child. This shows that staff are actively engaged in supporting children in all aspects of their lives. They help them to make decisions by helping children to consider the impact of actions on their current situation and	

on their futures.

Staff advocate for children with their placing authorities and other professionals. This ensures that children's voices are heard. In addition, an independent visitor attends the home fortnightly. She develops good relationships with the children and supports them to raise concerns or complaints with the senior management team or their placing authorities.

Staff support children to lead healthy lives. They work well with local health professionals to ensure that children know how to access health appointments and obtain the treatment and health advice they need, including sexual healthcare and vaccinations. This means that children's health needs are very well met. Children learn self-care skills, including how to budget, shop for and prepare nutritious meals. Staff assist children to use public transport and help them to build up confidence in accessing community facilities safely after a period in a secure setting.

Staff provide children with very good support in preparation for transition to new placements. The home works in collaboration with placing authorities and the new provider to ensure that the new placement suitably meets the needs of the child. Children benefit from the care and attention that the home gives to this task. The emotional support that staff provide during this period helps children to see that they are cared for and reduces their anxieties.

Many of the children live far from home, and staff support them to maintain contact with family and friends when this is in their best interests. Children have access to a phone which they can use in private to speak to family and friends, but staff dial the number from the office. Children say that they are happy with this arrangement, which promotes their safety by ensuring that they are not contacting unsuitable people from the home's phone.

Most children are over 16 when they arrive at the home. Most placements are for a time-limited period, to assist children in preparing for a transition to home or to independent living after a time in the secure setting on the same site. Consequently, enabling access to education, employment or training is an ongoing challenge for the home. Indeed, some children's emotional needs are such that they are not yet ready to participate in meaningful, formal education. Access to short college courses is not always an option, because children are admitted to the home part-way through college terms. The home's links with alternative education providers and with virtual schools are not yet strong. Consequently, some children who are over 16 and not yet ready to engage in employment or training do not have a well-structured day, and do not engage in even limited education. This does not help them, within their own limitations, to develop skills for future employment.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Children report that they are safe in the home, and describe it as a 'good' home. They said that 'staff avoid restraint at all costs', and say that this is because staff listen to them and treat them with respect. There has been only one restraint since the last full inspection. Sanctions are rarely used. Instead, staff help children to manage their own behaviour through building trusting relationships. Individual 'missing from care' protocols are shared with the police and local safeguarding authority, where necessary. This helps to protect children who go missing and ensures that action is taken swiftly to promote their safe return. For example, most children who live at the home are considered to be at high risk, should they go missing. Unsupervised time away from the home is carefully managed and children are expected to keep in touch with staff. As soon as a concern for a child's whereabouts arises, staff search the local area and quickly alert police when a child cannot be located. There have been no children missing from home since the last inspection. However, the home has strengthened the arrangements for ensuring that children are interviewed by an independent person on their return from being missing, so that any safety concerns can be promptly addressed. The quality of individual person-centred risk assessments has improved and is now good. Risk assessments outline the particular risks to children's safety, and guide staff in how to mitigate against and manage those risks. They are regularly reviewed and updated. This helps to ensure that staff know how to keep children safe and have a good understanding of each child's individual safety needs, including risks of grooming and child sexual exploitation. The home has done much to address the shortfalls in keeping children safe that were central to the last inspection. Through retraining staff, improving management oversight and better staff supervision, the home has taken action to ensure that children at risk of child sexual exploitation are better supported and prepared for future independence. Records demonstrate a stronger focus on supporting children to understand how to stay safe. In particular, key-worker sessions focus on children's known risk-taking behaviour. There is good evidence of discussions about grooming, on-line safety and self-respect. However, the staff team has not yet developed a broad selection of strategies and techniques to help them to reach children who are resistant to change. The impact of their work is not	

yet clear, as some children still do not recognise risks to their safety. Children known to be at risk of child sexual exploitation have regular sessions with specialist workers provided by their placing authority. This enhances their safety.

The home has acquired a desktop computer that is available for children to access the internet to support their learning. Strong safety measures are in place that not only prevent access to unsuitable sites, but also reliably and swiftly alert the manager to any attempt to access inappropriate materials. There is good evidence of the manager addressing this immediately with children. However, the safety measures are so effective that they do not allow staff and children to access safeguarding materials and YouTube videos produced by the NSPCC and others. To address this, the home has recently acquired a dedicated, Wi-Fi enabled laptop computer. Plans are in place for staff to use the laptop with children to access learning materials together and to use these as a starting point to help to educate children about staying safe from exploitation and domestic violence. The manager is confident that this will help the home to raise children's awareness of how to stay safe, but it has not yet been tested.

The home has taken steps to improve the way that it supports children's safe use of technology. Staff explain the home's rules and expectations to children before they allow them to use mobile phones and to access social media. Specialist child sexual exploitation support workers who are involved with a child are not consulted before the decision is made to provide a child with a mobile phone. However, decisions are made in collaboration with the child's placing authority, and enable children to take risks in a safe environment where they can receive support and guidance should they encounter danger. While this shows that the home is cooperating with the placing authority's care plan, it does not show robust decision-making based on sound risk assessment. Guidance on what action to take in response to a child misusing a phone to engage in dangerous behaviour is not clearly laid out for staff. While practice has improved, these shortfalls demonstrate that the home needs to do more to ensure that protecting children is given the highest possible priority.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
Since the last inspection there have been changes to the senior management team in the organisation. This includes the appointment of a new responsible individual who shares responsibility for the delivery of the service with the registered manager. The responsible individual is suitably qualified and knowledgeable, and has extensive experience of managing and delivering children's social services. The manager has been registered with Ofsted since January 2015. She is suitably qualified to diploma level 5 in the management of a children's social care provision. She has many years' experience as a children's social care practitioner and manager, and has worked for this organisation with children in care for 26 years. She is very well respected by staff, colleagues and other professionals. She leads a team of 12 staff who are qualified to care for children and young people. Staff confirm that they are well supported by the manager and, in her absence, by the responsible individual. Leaders and managers have a clear vision for the development of the home. They know its strengths and weaknesses, and take decisive action to address shortfalls in practice. For example, the manager challenges poor practice and, where necessary, addresses it through performance management. She recognises that staff need to improve their skills in helping children to adjust to living in the community without returning to a dangerous lifestyle. Requirements and recommendations raised following the last inspection have been met, and this has strengthened the quality of support and children's safety. A new training officer has been appointed and, following an audit of staff training needs, is setting up a range of high-quality training events to help staff to develop more in-depth understanding and develop their skills further. Three members of staff have begun a university course on understanding and working with children who have attachment difficulties. Others have been trained in supporting children at high risk of going missing and child sexual exploitation. The staff team is excited by the organisation's recognition of the importance of their work, and its commitment to helping them improve their skills in supporting children with highly complex and challenging needs. The staff team has been beset with illness in recent months. This has impacted significantly on the staff rota. The commitment of the team is commendable. Staff have worked overtime to fill gaps in the rota, recognising the children's need for a	

stable team of carers that they know well. Consequently, no agency staff have been used and no impact on children has been evident.

Staff receive good levels of supervision and support through regular one-to-one supervision, weekly case management meetings and team meetings. They receive good guidance and direction from the manager, and benefit from monthly reflective practice meetings with a clinical psychologist. Staff recognise that this helps them to have a better understanding of children's behaviour and emotional needs, and they take more responsibility for promoting good experiences and improved outcomes. Consequently, their responses to challenging behaviour are increasingly appropriate and more nurturing, and they are more actively involved in ensuring children's needs are well met.

Improved monitoring of the quality of care and the operation of the home ensures that the manager knows the children well, and has a good insight into their needs and progress. The manager is fully involved in care planning, working closely with individual staff to drive improvement through identifying goals and supporting staff to achieve them. She has introduced a new system of monitoring children's progress closely each week, identifying barriers to progress and setting actions to promote continuous development. By continually measuring children's progress, highlighting quickly when strategies are not successful and taking prompt action, the home is refining its systems with a view to preventing drift and ensuring that children make continuous, steady progress.

The home works well with placing social workers and other agencies. The manager is making good progress in establishing relationships with other professionals locally. For example, she meets regularly with other providers, the police and safeguarding professionals. It benefits from sharing knowledge of local issues relating to children in care, including risks in the community. She maintains good contact with the police so that children at risk of going missing and child sexual exploitation are known to the police, and are protected by the strong protocols in place.

The home's records have improved. For example, key-worker sessions are better recorded and show in more detail the discussions with children, including information and guidance focusing on their individual safety needs. More needs to be done to ensure that records demonstrate measurable progress. For example, records relating to skills acquisition in preparation for independent living do not show how the home has supported the child to learn new skills. Nor do records always show how the needs identified in a child's local authority placement plan are being addressed and monitored. The impact of these shortfalls on children's experiences and progress is minimal.

Partnership working is mostly good. It is effective in ensuring that children receive the help that they need from a wide range of health and community services. The home's relationships with virtual schools, Connexions and local education provisions are less well developed. Consequently, attempts to influence other professionals to provide suitable education, employment or training for children aged 16 to 18 are not always successful. The home continues to challenge other professionals to meet their obligations to children, but a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and faster escalation to senior managers would help the home to achieve more success in this area.

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 looked after children 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 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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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