

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	28/09/2015
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	Liz Jackson
Registered manager	Susan Hatton
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd

Inspection date	28/09/2015
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

SC022447

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Staff build strong and effective relationships with children that help them to feel loved and wanted
- Staff support children to maintain and re-establish contact with families and this helps children to prepare for the future, develop confidence and re-establish broken or damaged relationships.
- Children enjoy their lives and develop confidence and skills through positively engaging in a wide range of activities that meet their needs.
- Children are safe in the home and feel safe. The home works closely with partner agencies and parents to promote the safety of children who run away.
- Children's voices are at the centre of the home's practice.
- The home is well led and managed. Staff are well qualified and have had training to help them meet children's individual needs.
- Children with highly complex and challenging behaviour and deep emotional and psychological issues are well supported by a consistent and positive staff team. This promotes stability.
- There are no disrupted placements. Where the home is not meeting a child's needs, for example, their safety needs, the home works with the placing authority and staff advocate for the child to identify a more suitable placement so that children move on in a planned and positive way.

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 each child's day to day health and well-being needs are met. In particular, risk assess and review the need for night staff to carry out checks on individual children throughout the night and make sure that the need for such checks, where appropriate, is agreed in a child's placement plan (The Guide, page 33, paragraph 7.3)

- review the arrangements for children's use of the phone. In particular, provide access to a phone that children can use privately in line with the contact arrangements laid out in their individual placement plans (The Guide, page 58, paragraph 11.17)
- review the arrangements for providing children with access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning, unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why this would be inappropriate. In particular, strengthen the arrangements for helping children to learn about the risks associated with grooming and harmful sexual relationships by using on-line materials designed for this purpose. (The Guide, page 29, paragraph 5.19)

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 seven children with emotional and / or behavioural difficulties. The home provides transition 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
07/01/2015	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
12/06/2014	CH - Full	Good
13/03/2014	CH - Interim	Inadequate Progress
11/07/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
The home provides exceptionally good, individualised care that helps children to prepare for future independent living and supports them through challenging and difficult times in their lives. Placement plans are informed by local authority care plans and risk management plans and staff know and follow them well. Wherever possible, children visit the home before they move in. This helps to reduce their anxieties about a change of placement. Two of the staff also work in the secure children's home on the same site. This is a bonus for children who move from the secure home to this open home as knowing some of the staff helps them to feel more comfortable about the placement move. For most children, the home provides short term care as a step down from the secure children's home environment, with a focus on helping children develop confidence and good habits in preparation for the future. Two children have moved on successfully, but one is unhappy and misses the staff team and life in the home. Staff have reported her low mood to her leaving care social worker, demonstrating they continue to care about the children after they have left. Some children have long term placements and remain in the home until they are ready to leave care. The home provides stability and consistency in a nurturing environment. It provides opportunities for children preparing for independent living to learn self-care and budgeting skills and encourages engagement in the community through attendance at college and a range of social events. However, for some children, with complex emotional and psychological needs, progress is slow. A key strength of the home is the quality of the relationships between staff and children. The home successfully provides a homely, safe and stimulating environment in which children feel loved. One child explained, 'They make me feel wanted. They understand and they don't force the conversation, but are always open. I have a lot of key worker sessions. It's a tight group of staff and they are all nice and all different.' Because the home places children's views at the heart of its practice, children feel that staff have their best interests at heart and this leads to a harmonious and relaxed atmosphere in the home where children are focused on improving their lives. A child explained, with enthusiasm, 'They listen to us. I come up with ideas,	

like, we're going to have a cook-off and we're doing "Come dine with me". It's between the staff and young people. And I'm re-doing the children's guide, because it's too long.'

Partnership agencies recognise how well the home supports individual children to have enjoyable experiences and to make progress. For example, a placing authority manager said, 'They are building strong relationships with her. We want her to learn how to feel safe with men and they are teaching her that. The two men on the team are good role models for her. One takes her to rugby and football and the other is like a grandad figure. Nobody cared for her before; but they care for her. She is needy and she enjoys one-to-one time with staff. They have a good balance of individual time and nurture as well as time to learn independence. She is learning to look after herself.'

The home successfully challenges placing authorities to listen to children and to have a greater focus on their wishes and feelings. For example, it arranged contact for a child and her family to be held at a local hotel, supported and supervised by staff. This ensured she had privacy and could enjoy the time with her family better. She recognised that the home had gone the extra mile to make the experience more pleasurable for her and this contributed to her experience of feeling nurtured and cared for by the staff team. In her words, 'They always fight your corner.'

A visiting advocate explained, 'They call me whenever they feel a child needs that extra support. They really listen to the children. It's a joy to come here and I go to a lot of places. They really advocate for children, from the top manager down to a support worker. They are all interested in the children and they all know they need to advocate for children. It's very different from other places. There are many children's homes and local authorities that don't do it.'

The staff team are sensitive to children's wishes and feelings and children know they can turn to them for support and advice. There have been three complaints from one child since the last inspection. All have been responded to swiftly and this has improved the child's day to day experiences. One complaint related to night staff entering her bedroom through the night to check on her. She found this practice, aimed at protecting children, to be intrusive and challenged it as being unnecessary. Although the practice has stopped for this child, it continues for others. The home has not taken the opportunity to review or risk assess the need for this practice.

Children moving to the home from a secure setting are sometimes anxious about re-engaging with community life. The home encourages them to take small steps that promote their independence. A child explained, 'I was scared to go out at first. I didn't know the area. They encouraged me to go to local shops on my own and explained the directions. It's only five minutes. I did it – it makes you feel good about yourself.'

Staff encourage children to use public transport and support them to do so until they are deemed safe to travel alone.

The home supports children's health needs very well, in accordance with their individual needs. Staff ensure that children with complex health problems requiring specialist interventions attend health appointments and receive the treatment they need. They encourage children to do exercise and take them swimming and to the gym regularly. Staff participate alongside children and this successfully encourages them to engage with sport and increase their level of fitness.

Equally, the home is sensitive to children's cultural needs. A child explained how staff go out of their way in their own time to shop for specialist foods that reflect her culture and promote her identity, 'They are respectful of my culture and embrace it. They are eager to learn. Staff get me special food when they are not working – they are still thinking about me. It's not just a job to them. I like that. I feel wanted'.

Not all children have a suitable education placement when they are admitted to the home. In these circumstances, the home successfully challenges the placing authority, through effective collaborative working with the virtual head and engagement in personal education planning meetings, to provide education that meets the child's needs. This may be delivered through part-time tutoring or attendance at local provision.

Staff have high aspirations for children and engender in them a desire to succeed. The children currently living at the home are all aged between 16 and 18 and have individually tailored programmes of education, learning and employment that promote their independence and future employability. This includes participating in voluntary work to gain skills in working as part of their transition to the adult world.

Staff support children's engagement in college or work very well. One child explained, 'I've started voluntary work. They didn't just leave me to it. They came down at lunch time and took me to lunch – they made sure I was ok. They really think about me...' Children are developing high aspirations and confidence in their abilities to gain successful employment in the future.

Children are all placed some distance from their home authorities. The home facilitates contact and enables families to visit, where appropriate. Staff accompany children on home visits until it is safe for them to make these visits unaccompanied. Children have phone contact with their families but this is limited because the phone is kept in the office and can only be used with staff permission, on the landing, which does not allow for a private conversation. A child explained, 'We can use the phone after 6pm for 15 minutes. It's quite limited but they usually let me stay on longer.' The time restrictions are not always based on the child's individual needs. This means children may be unnecessarily restricted from having

the contact with their family that they would like and are entitled to.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
All children have a history of high vulnerability. This includes children who have been frequently being missing from home or care and have been victims of child sexual exploitation. Some are at high risk of self-harm and some display levels of violence and aggression that puts other people at risk of harm. Most children have very complex and challenging behaviour. Risks to children's safety are well understood by managers and staff. Good risk management plans, drawn up in partnership with placing authorities, are known to and accepted by children. For example, children at risk of grooming understand why they are not allowed a mobile phone or unsupervised access to social media. Clear boundaries and effective behaviour management strategies support children to take acceptable risks that promote their development, while keeping them safe. For example, before outings and contact visits, the risks to children's safety are analysed and action is taken to mitigate them as far as possible. The risks are discussed with children and they understand that staff care about their safety and welfare. This helps children to make the right choices and keep themselves safe. For example, one said, 'Yesterday was amazing. They took me for a meeting - 5 hours each way. I'm really proud of myself. I visited my family, went to the meeting and came back –I could have run, but I didn't. They made it a nice day. They were good company and I trust them to help me.' The incidence of children going missing is well monitored and managed. Since the last inspection, two children have been missing from home on a total of five occasions. Three children have been absent from the home on a total of nine occasions. In these instances, children have returned to the home safely within a matter of hours or have gone home to their families, where they have been allowed to stay, with permission from placing authorities. The home has responded robustly on each occasion, searching for the children, contacting families and reporting them swiftly to the police. In one instance, the child returned to secure accommodation after the third incident. The other child was running away to be with family. The home worked in partnership with a children's advocate, parents and with the placing authorities of two children to enable them to return to their home or home area, in accordance with their	

wishes. For one child, this involved staff providing very close supervision and support to the family, including several daily visits and food parcels, support and advice. This has proved successful in helping the child re-establish herself safely in her home environment.

On their return to the home, children who have been missing are routinely interviewed by the police and by staff to ensure they are safe and well. The home pro-actively seeks to involve placing authorities in providing independent return home interviews. Children usually have an independent visit by or on behalf of the placing authority after being missing, but not after being absent without permission. Recognising the value of independent return home interviews, the home contracts this service from an independent advocate who is a regular visitor to the home, known to and trusted by the children. She interviews all children who have been absent without permission. This enables any concerns for their safety to be quickly addressed.

None of the five children who have lived in the home since the last inspection have been engaged in child sexual exploitation since their admission to the home. Staff are alert to the dangers of grooming and the need to educate children to understand when they are being exploited and increase their self-respect and self-esteem. They follow up work begun in the secure children's home building trusting relationships with children, helping them to feel well-cared for and safe. They use key worker sessions to focus on the importance of staying safe and having healthy relationships. They have limited tools to help them educate children about the risks and signs of unhealthy relationships. This is because they do not have access to the internet and the wealth of useful short films produced by protection agencies for this purpose. This means some children remain vulnerable and their safe transition back into the community may be slower than otherwise possible.

Positive behaviour management is reinforced through the clear boundaries, good routines and supportive relationships staff have with children. All children feel safe, secure and well-cared for. For example, one said, 'I feel 100% safe ... They are my substitute family and really care about me. I like that. I feel wanted.' Another said, 'Staff are the best thing about this home. They are kind and my key worker is funny. We have key worker sessions where we talk about the past and what's gone on and they help me to think about things.'

There have been no incidents of self-harm in the home since before the last inspection. This is a testament to the improved emotional support staff provide to children who are vulnerable to dark thoughts and low mood. Some children remain unwilling to engage with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service or other therapists and their emotional and psychological well-being remains a concern.

To better support such children, the home has engaged a psychologist to work with the staff team, providing guidance and advice on the management and care

of children presenting complex psychological needs. This has taken some time to arrange and the first session is planned for the start of October 2015. In the meantime, staff have had some training which has helped them to have a better understanding of children's individual needs. External professionals recognise the difficulty in engaging with children who have complex psychological health needs and are unanimous in the view that staff are doing all they can to support these children.

The home works effectively with the police to protect children. Managers engage in regular meetings between providers and police and this ensures they know about local incidents and danger zones. They provide the police with profiles of the children so that there is no delay in the police searching for children who are missing. Where children display aggressive and violent behaviour, the home works with the police in a positive way to raise children's awareness of the consequences of anti-social and criminal offences, without criminalising their behaviour.

Staff use restraint infrequently but appropriately to prevent significant injury or harm to the child or others or serious damage to property. There has been one restraint since the last inspection. This is because there has been a reduction in children's violence against others as their levels of anxiety and anger have decreased. This means that visiting professionals feel safer and are more willing to engage with children in their care, education and independence planning. One professional explained, 'We do joint visits because she assaulted workers... she is engaging better and we have seen an improvement over the past 12 months but sometimes she refuses to see us. They are doing a good job with a very complex child.'

There have been no allegations against staff since before the last inspection. Children report they have no concerns about the home or the way they are looked after. They have ample opportunities to raise concerns through regular house meetings, key-worker sessions and the grumbles box. However, they say if they need to discuss anything they simply go to the staff on duty who will sort out whatever is needed.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
The manager was registered with Ofsted in 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 25 years. She is very well respected by staff, colleagues and other professionals who say she puts the needs of the children above all else.

The Registered Manager has made a significant impact on the delivery and quality of care. For example, she has successfully worked with other managers within the organisation to cease the practice of staff assisting in the secure children's home at short notice. This was an issue raised by children at the last inspection as they were not happy with their plans being overturned and favourite staff being called away at short notice. The staff team is now working more consistently with the children and this delivers a more settled and stable workforce.

The staff team know each other's strengths and weaknesses and this helps them to work together to provide the best possible environment for the children. For example, children engage in different activities with different staff. These include project work such as developing the summer house and children's guide, trips to the gym, swimming, shopping, cooking and trips to watch rugby matches.

Leaders and managers have good oversight of children's progress and take steps to ensure their continuous development. For example, they have developed the staff training programme with a focus on providing good parenting and have contracted with a psychologist to assist staff to better meet children's psychological needs.

The home is committed to having a well-trained and qualified staff team and currently, all staff are suitably qualified in caring for children and young people.

The home has reduced in size since the last inspection and now provides accommodation for up to three children in one house. The Statement of Purpose has been reviewed and a copy supplied to Ofsted. The home operates in accordance with its Statement of Purpose and is achieving the objectives laid out therein. Staff understand that their key task is to help children to feel loved and safe, and they do this well. The children's guide is currently under review with assistance from the young people currently in placement.

The Registered Manager knows and understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and has a development plan in place to address weaknesses and improve children's experiences through improved practice. Capacity to improve is good. The home has taken steps to address the requirements and recommendations made following the last inspection, all of which have been met, or partially met.

Management monitoring reports are completed each month and this enables the manager and senior staff to maintain a good overview of the operation of the home, the quality of care and children's outcomes. The six monthly report on the quality of care is due for submission to Ofsted at the end of October 2015 and a

draft report was shared during the inspection, showing effective oversight, monitoring of and reflection on the quality of care and children's progress. All significant incidents are notified to relevant professionals, including Ofsted.

The registered manager is working with the assistant manager to improve the quality of records so that they are written in a way that is more helpful to children accessing their records now or in the future. This work has already begun and the home plans to begin electronic recording in the near future. Staff training events are set up to facilitate this.

Staff receive improved levels of support, advice and guidance which enable them to meet the specific needs of the children in placement. Team meetings focus on case discussion and provide an opportunity for staff to share good practice and reflect on the way they manage challenges.

Staff receive good quality support through regular team meetings, training and supervision. Staff meetings focus on children's progress and development so that staff know and understand what is expected of them in terms of their interaction and interventions with children. Additional training has been provided since the last inspection to increase the skills and understanding of the staff team in meeting the specific needs of some children.

Not all staff have completed training on caring for children at risk of child sexual exploitation but they still showed a good awareness of the vulnerabilities of these children and how to protect them. A rolling programme is in place and all staff are scheduled to complete this training in the near future.

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

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