

SC025695

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The provider is a registered childcare charity and housing association that has a number of different services registered with Ofsted. This home provides care and accommodation for up to eight children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 July 2017

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 8 November 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The leadership and management team is highly effective and offers good

support and challenge to staff, which staff fully appreciate.

- The staff team is committed, enthusiastic, caring and warm. Young people recognise this and value it.
- There is an open, sharing and positive approach to working with other agencies. This means that young people benefit from a strong and combined professional network.
- The staff and leadership team are supportive of various cultural and religious preferences, and effortlessly accommodate these into the life of the home.
- The staff and leadership team are good at helping traumatised young people who may be in poor emotional and physical health and have few skills. The young people are enabled and begin to thrive in this culture.
- Written records are kept well, with regularly updated risk assessments and plans.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Young people who are out of school have insufficient structure and routine in their day.
- There is a lack of clarity over when the police should be called to the home.
- Bathrooms and some bedrooms are basic and functional. In addition, toileting and bathroom arrangements for female young people are not satisfactory.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/11/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/04/2016	Full	Good
04/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22/06/2015	Full	Good

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
6. The quality and purpose of care standard Ensure that the premises are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child. This relates both to the bathroom and particularly to the toileting facilities for the female young people living in the home. (Regulation 6 (c) (1))	06 September 2017
14. The care planning standard Ensure that children receive effectively planned care through the children's home. This particularly relates to those young people not receiving education, and ensuring that their days are planned and structured. (Regulation 14 (1) (a))	06 September 2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that there is agreement with the local police force about procedures and guidance on police involvement in the home, to reduce unnecessary police involvement in managing behaviour and criminalisation of behaviours. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 47, paragraph 9.40)
- Ensure that all areas of the children's home are a homely and domestic environment. This particularly relates to bathrooms and toilets and some bedrooms. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people receive a good standard of individualised care. Staff face particular challenges in delivering such care successfully. Large numbers of young people move into and leave the home, some staying for very short periods of time. In addition, young people admitted are a particularly diverse group. They may be local, or may have just arrived from a variety of crisis-torn countries. This makes the staff's task particularly challenging. However, they rise to this task well, usually managing to offer young people a nurturing experience which promotes good progress. A minority of young people are reluctant to engage with staff. Managers and staff worry about these young people, and continually strive to find ways to work with them.

A particular strength of this home is its relationships with external professionals. These professionals praise the open and welcoming culture which enables successful team working to promote young people's best interests. The home also works closely with parents, as appropriate, but will act as an advocate for a young person if necessary. Young people usually enjoy spending time with staff. They feel that they can trust them and that they can have fun with them.

Young people who have arrived from other countries make great progress, particularly in their knowledge of the language and culture of their new country. Young people's emotional health is well supported by the strong links that the home has formed with local psychological resources. Some young people arrive in poor physical health; the home is effective in obtaining appropriate medical care for them.

Most young people attend and engage in education. However, for the minority who are not, their day lacks a sense of structure and purpose. This risks young people seeking other less constructive ways to break their boredom, for instance by engaging in activities which put them at risk of harm.

Young people's views are important to staff in the home. Their preferences in day-to-day living are routinely gathered at young people's meetings; they are also involved in areas such as staff recruitment. Young people are clear about how to complain and confident about doing so. They said that they are listened to and that 'things get done'.

Most young people have positive daily experiences. There is an appropriate daily routine for those in education, free time after this, and opportunities at the weekend to help with chores in the house and garden. Young people are encouraged to engage in activities in the local community and within the home. Special events regularly feature, such as cultural nights to add novelty and fun. The ethos of the home is to offer a warm family home feel. A young person acknowledged this, saying, 'The people are nice, I feel safe here, and the food is good.'

Most young people in the home are older teenagers. As such, preparation for independent living is a priority in this home. The starting points for young people are very different.

Some fully understand the culture, but need practical skills, while other young people need both. Staff offer a personalised approach which usually involves achieving a basic level of skills in relation to washing, cooking and money management, as well as achieving cultural and educational skills as appropriate. Some young people go on to foster care placements, and staff are active partners in planning the pace of introductions and eventual moves.

A further strength of this home is meeting the diverse cultural needs of young people whose home of origin is far away. For example, the home prioritises funding appropriate religious items, such as prayer mats, as soon as possible after admission, and cultural food choices are readily available. There are positive links with local mosques, and this cultural acceptance helps young people feel welcomed and valued.

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

This home has effective systems to assess young people's risks and monitor their progress. For example, risk assessments are comprehensive, updated monthly and clearly outline risks and strategies to deal with these. Some young people are admitted from risky places, having completed dangerous, long journeys. Generally, they move on from the home into more independent accommodation, which provides them with much greater skills in communicating, understanding their culture and keeping themselves safe.

Leaders and managers in the home have successfully advocated for additional waking night staff, and more effective electronic systems to call for help. Both these measures are now in place and, as a result young people and staff are now better protected.

Leaders and managers are very aware of possible risks to young people's welfare, such as bullying and radicalisation. Staff are appropriately trained in these areas, with systems in place to deal with or escalate concerns. Currently, a minority of young people are routinely going missing from the home. Staff have good relationships with the local police, and are fully aware of the appropriate protocols to follow. Young people at risk of going missing from the home have individualised, detailed protocols which are regularly updated. Staff will follow young people where possible, and try to keep in touch with them during episodes of missing. Return from missing interviews are routinely held in the home, and intelligence from these is usefully shared. Although missing from home episodes have not recently decreased, there are encouraging signs that some young people are confiding more and staying in touch with staff when away from the home without permission.

Generally, the atmosphere in the house is a warm and positive one. Young people are knowledgeable about their individualised reward system and the sanctions that they may receive. Sanctions are used appropriately, and young people said that they are 'generally fair'. In-house placement plans include behaviour support plans. These are sufficiently detailed about the things that can trigger negative behaviour from young people. They include clear guidance for staff and the approaches that help reduce risk; these are regularly updated. By staff knowing the young people well, and using agreed strategies to

change the overall mood, they are able to manage most incidents appropriately. Restraint is not used in this home. However, recently there has been a small increase in the number of times when staff have called the police to the home to manage crisis situations. Managers are aware of this issue and are concerned about this. As a result, managers are planning to clarify with staff and the police when it is acceptable for them to be called to attend incidents at the home.

Staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding and use reporting systems appropriately. For example, any allegations made by young people are promptly shared with the designated safeguarding officer; staff then follow any advice that is given.

There is a strong commitment to keeping the home environment as safe as possible. There is a current location assessment, with a member of staff designated with health and safety responsibilities. This means that, for example, fire-safety checks are routinely and thoroughly completed as required.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is well managed by a permanent registered manager who is well supported by her wider management team. The registered manager is ambitious for all the young people 'to be their best', and has a very good knowledge of their strengths and areas of concern. She is tenacious in pursuing other agencies when areas of concern arise, for example challenging a local authority over some of its placement decisions. The registered manager is confident in her judgements and will successfully ask for strategy meetings to be held if there are significant concerns about a young person. She is currently undertaking the diploma level 5 qualification in leadership and management, although she will be leaving the home shortly to take up another registered manager post. Arrangements for her successor are in place to ensure as smooth a management transition as possible.

Training for staff is well targeted to the main groups that they care for. Staff feel that they benefit from this. Staff meetings are regularly held, and contain a mixture of discussions about young people, and visits from relevant visiting professionals. Formal supervisions and appraisals are routinely carried out in a timely fashion. Formal supervision sessions with staff contain a good mix of challenge and support. Staff members said that they think supervision is 'a massive help', 'really supportive' and 'helps you think things through'. Staff also said that they are led well, and find their managers 'empowering'. They enjoy working with their colleagues, and trust them. This positive and confident group of staff are well equipped to continue to offer young people a high level of individualised care.

Written files are well maintained, and generally up to date. Staff value the deputy manager's regular file audits, which act as a non-blaming safety net, and prompt them about any omissions. The leadership team is constantly looking to make improvements to the care offered to young people. For example, a new reward system has recently been introduced and a target system is currently being trialled.

The statement of purpose has just been updated and confirms the current purpose of the home and the mix of young people who live in it. The registered manager carefully considers all requests for admissions, and completes a matching form which goes back to the local authority. She does not always have the final say on admissions, but any possible concerns are usually subject to negotiation, with further safeguards put in place.

Living areas in the home are warm and comfortably furnished. However, bathrooms and some young people's bedrooms are basic, functional and lack personalisation. Female young people make up a very small minority of the living group. This provides a challenge for the home in terms of appropriately respecting all young people's dignity and privacy within bathroom and toilet spaces. Consequently, the current arrangements are not satisfactory for female young people.

The leadership team is open and welcoming to working with others to help young people achieve their aims. Monthly reports are reliably sent to social workers, while care staff attend and contribute in meetings, with any concerns about young people readily shared across the professional network. This ensures that all parties with a vested interest in supporting and guiding young people are fully involved in planning for their care.

The rich mix of nations in this home means that, generally, equality and diversity issues are prominent. Young people value staff's flexibility around Ramadan in that they changed kitchen opening times. Staff have also been sensitive to some gender issues. For example, ensuring that a same-gender staff member is on duty at night. The home also holds cultural nights, to increase young people's knowledge and experience of other ways of living.

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 differences 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: SC025695

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Registered provider address: 1 Putney High Street, London SW15 1SZ

Responsible individual: Ron Giddens

Registered manager: Julee Aiken-Brown

Inspector(s)

Bridget Goddard, social care inspector

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