

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	26 April 2016
Unique reference number	SC025695
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Agata Dokszeicz
Inspector	Barnaby Dowell

Inspection date	26 April 2016
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

SC025695

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The care of young people remains supported by a strong theoretical basis, offering unique insight into behavioural causes and coping strategies.
- Risk assessments are thorough and comprehensive, giving clear guidance to staff. This supports a consistent response from staff and keeps young people safe.
- The home benefits from the support of the local child sexual exploitation risk analyst. This provides valuable information on issues in the local area and further reduces the risk of exploitation.
- A therapeutic practitioner who works within the home offers intensive support to young people and clinical supervision to staff.
- Staff are inventive and proactive in engaging young people, offering regular and effective key work support.
- All young people remain placed by the host local authority. This supports established professional relationships and ensures that they enjoy good access to specialist support such as therapy.
- Young people are actively involved in the running of the home. Advocacy is routinely offered and the house president represents feelings well.
- Young people progress well in education. In general staff apply appropriate boundaries to support learning. However, this approach is not always consistently applied.
- Although the home offers a good standard of accommodation the condition of the garden area is preventing full use by young people.

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets 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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard with particular reference to the garden area, the registered person must— (2)(c) ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to (i) meet the needs of each child.	30 May 2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendation:

- Ensure the provision of support to sustain or regain confidence in education and engagement in suitable structured activities ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 27, paragraph 5.5).

Full report

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 with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
4 January 2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22 June 2015	Full	Good
29 December 2014	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
16 June 2014	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people are happy in the home. Staff offer consistent warmth and support, and hugs and cuddles are readily available. Young people make consistent progress from their own individual starting points. One young person commented, 'I love it here, staff really look after me.' Key work is regular and effective. Staff adopt numerous strategies to engage young people. For example, decorating their own rooms and the introduction of memory boxes. This promotes close relationships and helps to develop self-esteem and confidence. Young people are proud of their home and develop new skills. Strong individualised care is evident. Staff encourage young people to learn from their issues by establishing good coping strategies. For example, attending the gym when feeling sad or upset. Incidents of violent behaviour have subsequently decreased. Increased self-confidence is encouraged. One young person works as a young inspector. He recently contributed towards a nationwide review of residential care and fed back to his peers. The host local authority places all of the young people. This supports good access to schools, family contact and specialist support. Mentoring support now offers regular independent visits and advocacy for young people. Participation is strong. The home recently adopted a house president. This young person is an important role model and advocate within the home. This means young people's wishes and feelings consistently remain represented. Educational achievement is valued. Young people enjoy safe use of the internet in private study areas within the home. One young person returned to school after one year outside of education. The young person sees this as an enormous sense of achievement for himself with staff noting how this is an inspiration for others. Good partnership working with the local authority supports effective monitoring of progress and attainment. Despite this, two young people were observed watching television during the inspection during education time. Managers are committed to supporting adherence to daily planners and acknowledge the shortfall did not support the overall positive focus on learning. Staff prioritise healthy living in the home. Young people access a local boxing club and recently completed a successful weight-loss programme. Planning the weekly menu focuses on reducing intake of junk food. Sexual health screening and statutory medicals help monitor and support physical health. There is a rich choice of activities. Staff strive to offer numerous outings and leisure opportunities via accessing community resources. For example, a recent	

theatre outing in central London. These outings and opportunities support the celebration of academic achievement. Staff prioritise positive contact and appropriately challenge allocated social workers for assessment of family and friends to support overnight contact. One young person has recently contacted the Red Cross to trace relatives abroad. Staff use strong relationships with parents to support safeguarding, for example sharing information displayed on social media. One parent commented, 'They do everything they can, we talk all the time and they really help. I am happy with what they are doing there.'

Work on independence skills is entrenched and incentivised. Staff follow a clear programme of exercises which evidence progress and act as a pictorial record of key work sessions. This has improved outcomes for those moving onto semi-independence.

Culture and difference are celebrated. The home accommodates a number of asylum-seeking young people. Induction remains supported by good access to interpreting services. Cultural evenings support learning. Staff are quick to challenge discriminatory language and are conscious of possible signs of bullying.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
There is a proactive, inventive safeguarding culture in the home. This culminates in strong multi-agency working with the host local authority. There is an established relationship with the local child sexual exploitation risk analyst. He provides unique and in-depth knowledge of the local area, including information on social media and local gang activity. This informs staff practice and care planning and keeps young people safe. Strong training and theoretical understanding support high levels of care. Quick and accurate assessment of young people's behaviours inform comprehensive risk assessments and planning. Staff regularly review and updated these. This helps them to have a key input into strategies that help young people to stay safe. An in-house therapist offers excellent support within the home. This encourages engagement by removing the stigma and inconvenience of attending an outside agency. The in-house therapist has a close relationship with young people and offers consistent 'ad hoc' guidance on de-escalation strategies and behavioural prompts. Staff effectively mediate between young people and support good behaviour. Staff know and understand their respective strengths and weaknesses. This leads to a strong, coordinated response when young people struggle. The clear team dynamic is a source of reassurance to young people. Sanctions are well used and effective. Case records indicate that young people understand and recognise why the intervention has occurred. There is evidence of	

good use of behavioural contracts. Staff work hard to develop coping strategies to avoid repetition via regularly 'debriefing' young people after an incident has occurred.

Staff strongly advocate for specialist assessments of young people's needs. Clear and concise case records help to support evidenced proposals for further assessment and improve outcomes for young people.

Recent training has raised awareness of the risks of radicalisation. Staff liaise well with local places of worship and attempt to gain a full understanding of social networks and acquaintances of the young people.

There is a strong response when young people go missing from the home. Trusting relationships with staff encourage regular phone contact when young people leave the home. Staff effectively record their clothing on departure. Independent return to care interviews remain offered to young people and strong relationships with friends and family support effective monitoring. Such an approach has helped reduce the occasions young people leave the home without permission.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager has been in post since March 2015. A deputy and a part-time administrative assistant support her. The manager has over 10 years of experience of working with young people and is qualified at level 5. The management team remains respected by staff, outside professionals and young people. There is a strong focus on service improvement. Managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home and have effective monitoring procedures. They learn from previous mistakes. Weekly staff meetings act as an open self-assessment of practice in the home. Staff feel empowered and central to the home's development. Full response and feedback remain offered to all complaints, with resulting concerns addressed during staff supervision. Staff morale is strong in the home. Young people benefit from a settled, consistent staff team. One staff member commented, 'We are a good team who has grown a lot in the last year. We are moving forwards.' There is limited use of agency staff. Staff report that training, supervision and appraisal is regular and of good quality. The in-house therapist understands the needs of the home and facilitates bespoke training. Other training is accessed via the local authority and the parent organisation. Staff members are allocated 'champion' specialist roles within the home. This promotes a good learning culture and supports staff retention. Admissions to the home are well considered. Emergency admissions involve	

rigorous assessment of placement documentation. Managers have established firm procedures and boundaries with the placing authority. This supports well-planned and informed decision making.

Managers advocate well for young people. Recently, staff supported a transition into foster care for a sibling group. This enabled placement together in a more suitable environment. When drift and delay is occurring, managers pursue information and seek confirmation of timescales.

Feedback from key professionals is positive. One social worker commented, 'There is a culture of recognising and nurturing potential in young people. The excellent training has given staff the resilience to deal with some difficult situations.'

Maintenance to the home does not occur promptly. Despite a programme of repairs occurring during this inspection, the garden space requires attention to enable full use during the summer months.

External monitoring of the home is regular. Ofsted receives monthly reports. The manager reports, 'It helps me to think things through.'

Recruitment practices are robust. All staff have up-to-date checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service. References are verified prior to any person starting work in the home. This ensures that unsuitable persons do not gain easy access to the home.

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 that 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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