

SC025812

Registered provider: McRae Residential Care Services Limited – 1021508

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home which provides care and accommodation for up to four young people. This home caters for young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 5 to 6 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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

Date of last inspection: 9 March 2017

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:

- A key feature of this home is the established staff and management team. This provides consistency for young people and a strong, organised team.
- The staff team, including the leaders and managers, excel at creating positive relationships with young people.
- Young people are accepted in the home regardless of the challenges they present and staff are motivated to help them change negative or risk-taking behaviours.
- Management and the staff team work well in collaboration with parents and other professionals to ensure better outcomes for young people.
- Leaders and managers challenge placing authorities to ensure that young people have the best opportunities possible.
- There is close attention to safeguarding young people. Managers and staff have a good awareness of the 'pull' factors in the community and help young people to make safer choices and prevent risky behaviours.
- The home offers a range of different activities and experiences to young people, including a summer holiday abroad.

The children's home's areas for development:

- This inspection has identified a shortfall in relation to lone working and staff being able to address the needs of all of the children in the home at these times.
- Improve how feedback from young people is used to improve and shape practice.
- Ensure that there is scrutiny of the use of restraint and better analysis of young people's going missing behaviour.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
29/11/2016	Full	Good
22/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
17/11/2015	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
The leadership and management standard: In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered provider must: ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child. with particular reference to staff working alone at the home Regulation 13 (2) (d)	08/09/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure children are consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Due consideration should be given to the child's cognitive ability in the development and implementation of any consultation processes. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- Ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny by the registered person to ensure their use is safe and ensure any child who has been restrained has an opportunity to express their feelings about their experience of restraint. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46–49, paragraphs 9.36 and 9.60)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people have the opportunity to develop close and trusting relationships with staff, who provide excellent role models for them. Staff are passionate about what they do and really enjoy coming to work. One staff member said, 'It's not a job, it's something I love

doing and it's my passion.' The affection and love they show to young people are evident in observations of interactions within the home.

Young people have the opportunity to have their say in how the home is run, what activities that they would like and planning menus for the week. These discussions happen at the weekly 'Teen Talk' meetings, which young people regularly attend. Although these meetings happen regularly, formal feedback from young people about the home and the staff team is missing. For example, young people could contribute feedback for appraisals and towards the overall development and progress of the home and the practice of the staff. Unique relationships exist which would support this level of contribution.

Young people know how to complain. There is an accessible children's guide, which is easy to understand. Young people have easy access to leaders and managers with whom they can raise issues. They are encouraged to meet with the independent visitor who visits the home monthly or to have a mentor or advocate who can support them with a range of issues.

Staff understand the importance of education for young people. They also understand the barriers which young people experience when accessing, engaging and making the best use of educational provision. All young people living at the home are on roll at a school or have an accepted place for college starting in September 2017. Staff encourage education through key-worker sessions and run a homework club after school hours in the home. This allows all young people to engage and receive one-to-one support with schoolwork.

Staff and managers ensure that young people have opportunities to take part in a range of activities while living at the home. For example, all young people have membership at a local gym and are involved in other recreational activities such as go-karting, swimming and attending boxing club. Staff ensure that birthdays are celebrated as special occasions. An independent reviewing officer recorded that a young person had a 16th birthday party with peers and carers, with food, drink and photographic mementos. The young person said, 'It's the best party I've ever had.' Every year, the staff take young people away on a holiday abroad. One young person told me about going on holiday to Spain while living at the home and that he had never been abroad before.

Young people have staff support to develop independent living skills. For example, one young person told the inspector that he does all his washing and ironing himself but the staff are there to help if needed. One staff member encourages young people to bake with him at the weekends, often baking and decorating cakes for birthday celebrations. The staff team at the home is diverse in ethnic background, age and culture. Young people are encouraged to understand their own identity and maintain regular contact with their birth family where it is safe for them to do so. The staff team has considerable skill in engaging and working with parents, recognising their significance for young people and the need for improving and sustaining these relationships for the future. Staff also support any dietary or religious needs and carefully consider such needs to ensure that young people feel welcome and included.

Staff ensure that young people's basic health needs are met, making sure they are registered with a local doctor's surgery and supporting young people to attend routine health appointments, such as dental and optician appointments. Where more specialist services are required, such as community mental health services, these are sought out immediately. Managers give robust challenge when such services are not forthcoming and this ensures that young people receive assessments and help when necessary.

Staff pay attention to capturing special occasions, developmental progress and achievements in photographs for young people. This area of work is under development, with managers thinking about how they can improve capturing significant events while young people are in their care and presenting this as life-story work to preserve memories.

Staff are skilled, experienced and able to build up rapport with young people. This helps staff to deliver consistent boundaries and messages about acceptable behaviour. The leaders and managers recently changed their approach to behaviour management. Instead of using sanctions for misdemeanours, there is a replacement incentive scheme. Money is earned for completing everyday tasks, such as personal hygiene, cleaning bedrooms, attending education and so on. The new scheme is giving young people incentives to improve behaviour and earn money for undertaking everyday tasks. Some young people are struggling with these changes; however, staff report an increase in positive behaviours and actions.

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

Young people say that they feel safe at this home and do not feel bullied in any way. They feel confident to report any allegations or concerns within the home. Relationships are very positive between young people and staff and this reduces allegations or any potential for misunderstandings. Young people are clear they know how to complain; one young person said, 'I know how to complain but I haven't had any reason to do so.'

The home benefits from clear safeguarding policy and procedures that help staff to understand how to report any safeguarding issues that arise. There have not been any incidents that have needed to be reported since the last inspection in March 2017. Staff spoken to were aware of their responsibilities to report any such issues and knew how to do so if necessary.

Detailed and well-informed risk assessments support staff to keep young people as safe as possible. Regular reviews ensure updates to these documents. The information helps staff to understand triggers for risky behaviours and gives strategies for managing and avoiding potential incidents. In addition, the home has received helpful background information from placing authorities that helps staff understand how previous trauma and experiences have influenced current behaviours.

The response to young people who go missing from the home is good. Multi-agency working is effective. Managers and staff monitor young people's absence and take steps

to protect them, for example involving the community police and the placing authorities when young people are absent or engaging in risk-taking behaviours. Better analysis of the incidents of going missing would help support the managers to understand patterns and think about strategies to reduce the number of episodes of going missing. The total number of episodes of going missing looks very high. However, when broken down to late returns, absent but whereabouts known and actual missing, they are slightly less concerning. The staff ensure that when young people return to the home after being missing they are offered an independent person to talk to them. This helps to ensure that young people are not worried about something at the home that has caused them to go missing. Staff make good efforts to retain young people at the home by building good relationships and engaging young people in activities. When they do go missing, staff seek to find out what they are doing when they are absent and to keep in regular contact with them. A police officer from the missing persons unit said, 'I've got no problems with the home placement; the staff are friendly, they give information when asked and update me.' This police officer is allocated to the home as the community officer and regularly attends the home. He is going to train the staff in police procedures about missing and absence, which will help them to understand processes and the police response.

The home manages challenging behaviour well and all staff are trained in de-escalation techniques. The positive relationships shared between staff and young people is a factor in reducing the number of incidents in the home. Notification of significant incidents is low, but incidents reported are appropriate and have been completed in a timely way.

Staff rarely restrain young people and try to avoid this if possible. Although it is rarely used, staff receive regular update training in restraint techniques. This ensures that staff have knowledge and understanding of how to manage difficult situations should they arise. A minor shortfall was identified in the recording of restraints, although this did not have any impact on young people or their safety. The person recording restraints should not be the same person who signs off the restraint log. This does not allow for any additional scrutiny or ensure proper use of such techniques. In addition, where young people choose not to make comments about the incident of restraint, some record that they have been asked to contribute should be recorded.

Staff receive training in all key areas of safeguarding, including all forms of exploitation, including child sexual exploitation and risk of radicalisation. This helps staff to keep up to date with new ideas, research and evidence about risks and helps them recognise signs and symptoms of developing abuse.

The home environment is of a high standard. The home is well maintained, homely and constantly redecorated to keep it fresh. The home benefits from regular health and safety checks to ensure that young people live in a safe environment. The manager completes an annual review of the area immediately outside the home to ensure that any wider risks are assessed to ensure young people's safety within the community.

Recruitment processes ensure appropriate checks for new staff or volunteers wanting to work in the home. These processes help protect young people from exposure to unsafe

people working in their home.

Adequate precautions prevent the risk of fires. Safety equipment is in place, and there is evidence of regular compliance checks and fire drills taking place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager is an experienced social work practitioner who holds a social work qualification and a certificate in management. He also has a master's level practice teaching award, which means that social work students can undertake social work placements at the home. The registered manager also manages another home owned by the same company, which is close by. In his absence, a full-time and experienced deputy manager oversees the day-to-day running of the home. She holds a level 5 management qualification. The management team works well together and offers a consistent response to both staff and young people.

Leaders and managers are aware that there are some shortfalls in the systems, which means they have been less effective than they would wish to be. Overall, the recommendations made at the interim inspection in March 2017 have been met. The statement of purpose is updated and is now available on the company website, although it was not provided to the regulator. The registered manager made some minor changes to this document and sent this to the regulator during the inspection.

Leaders and managers know the young people well and oversee an effective service, which is based on love, attention and inclusion. Leaders and managers seek to understand young people and help them understand social interactions. They do not reject young people because of unacceptable behaviours. They persevere with young people, helping them to feel self-worth and acceptance. If it is evident that a placement is not going to work for a young person, they work closely with placing authorities to ensure a managed move to a more appropriate resource. Placements do not tend to end in crisis even when there is a need for a move.

Transitions into the home are well managed. Managers carefully identify young people who will present the best match to the young people already resident at the home. Many referrals are rejected on the basis that they will not match and this prevents disruptions and improves outcomes for young people.

Lone working has been common practice at this home at night. At times, one night-waking member of staff has been responsible for up to three young people. A lone-working policy and risk assessment is in place; however, it is unclear how the control measures identified within the risk assessment will keep young people or staff safe in the event of an emergency. This is not supporting good levels of care for young people presenting with high levels of need. On two occasions, police involvement has been required, which potentially could have been avoided if further staff were available to de-escalate and prevent incidents occurring. Since the second incident, managers have responded by increasing the staffing levels at night, which is helping to keep both young people and staff safer.

The staff team is a small and consistent group of permanent workers, with only occasional use of bank workers to provide cover. They work well together and are happy working at the home. All staff either hold or are undertaking the required level 3 qualification in residential childcare. Staff report excellent training opportunities and feel well equipped to undertake the work they do with young people. Staff also receive regular monthly supervisions and yearly appraisals of their progress and development.

An independent visitor regularly monitors what goes on in the home and reports directly to Ofsted every month. These reports have improved in their analysis and are reflecting an impartial view of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. They can improve further by including scrutiny to the breakdown of episodes of going missing and absence of young people from the home. This would help the leaders and managers understand patterns and trends within this and other areas of practice.

The home is seeking feedback from young people, professionals and parents in a number of ways. This information can be found in the independent visitor's reports, within 'Teen Talk' meeting minutes and in various different places in case records. What is less clear is how leaders and managers use this feedback and information to shape and develop practice, to learn from complaints and improve the service that the home provides.

The home maintains an excellent record of working in partnership with other agencies and advocating for young people's rights. There are established local and community networks with placing authorities, youth offending services and the community police team as well as many others. These networks support and assist young people to stay safe and to enhance care planning.

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 difference 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: SC025812

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: McRae Residential Care Services Limited

Registered provider address: 57–61 Lodge Road, Croydon CR0 2PH

Responsible individual: Kevin Henry

Registered manager: Paul Rhys-Taylor

Inspector

Christine Kennet, social care inspector

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