

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	29/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC025812
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	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	Barnaby Dowell

Inspection date	29/11/2016
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	Requires improvement

SC025812

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people make good progress in the home and enjoy close and positive relationships with the staff team.
- The home benefits from a strong and permanent management group. The registered manager has been in post since 1997 and his deputy since 2014. This adds consistency and direction to the home.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture in the home. Staff go out into the community to meet with peers and associates of the young people and address concerns directly with them. This helps to reduce risky behaviour.
- Staff strive to work with parents in the best interests of young people. The deputy manager recently persuaded a parent to sign a passport application to allow a young person to enjoy a holiday.
- The home offers a range of different activities and experiences to young people. It is planning for young people to assist at a food bank over the Christmas period.
- Multi-agency work is strong in the home. There is a very positive relationship with the local police, with good levels of information exchange informing robust risk assessments.
- This inspection has identified shortfalls in safe recruitment and a failure to verify references fully. Furthermore, one staff member has failed to obtain a level 3 qualification within the required timescale.
- Additional concerns have arisen in relation to: staff appraisal, lone working, and analysis of levels of young people's missing behaviour and life story work. Managers are committed to addressing these concerns.

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
32: Fitness of workers (4) An individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained– (a) the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England)	01/07/2017
32: Fitness of workers The registered must– (1) recruit staff using recruitment procedures designed to ensure children's safety (3)(d) ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to previous employment history.	01/01/2017

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that, when conducting staff appraisals, managers endeavour to include the views of other professionals who have worked with the member of staff and the views of young people in the home. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- Ensure the evaluation of missing incidents be undertaken to identify any gaps in training, skills or knowledge for staff or to record and retain evidence of what worked well. This evaluation should inform the review of the quality of care. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', pages 46, paragraph 9.31)
- Ensure where lone working is assessed as acceptable, the manager should make a formal assessment of the implications for children's care, including any likely risks. The assessment should be recorded and available for inspection by Ofsted

and placing authorities. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.18)

- Introduce an album of pictures and mementos of time in the placement. This will help the development of life-story work for young people and a greater understanding of their history. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.14)

Full report

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.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
17/11/2015	Full	Good
03/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22/10/2014	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 their home and make good progress from their starting points. They enjoy close and trusting relationships with members of staff, often for the first time after a previously difficult care history. The home is guided by a simple principle of love and attention. Staff work tirelessly to support and nurture young people. Placing social workers refer to the home as a 'specialist wrap-up service and unique'. Former residents frequently return to the home to inform staff of their progress. Staff consistently go 'above and beyond' to support young people. The deputy manager persuaded a birth parent to sign consent for a passport application. This involved a careful period of negotiation and allowed the young person concerned to enjoy a recent holiday in Spain. Educational achievement is prioritised. Staff use successful motivational strategies to wake young people each morning and support school attendance. Other strategies include negotiating with tutors to visit the home late in the evening at the request of young people. Staff have established a homework club and provide a number of revision text books and past examination papers. This incorporates education into the daily life of the home, and young people engage well. One young person has returned to education after a three-year absence and is seeking to take GCSE examinations. This is his first positive experience of education and remains an enormous source of self-esteem and inspiration to others. Staff are proactive in seeking new learning experiences for young people. A staff member used a contact to source a programme of work experience with an engineering firm. In addition, young people are to spend some time over the Christmas period distributing parcels in a local food bank. These experiences are valuable and offer young people great insight and education about the outside community. Key work is regular and effective. Staff regularly initiate numerous key-work conversations on the dangers of social media and safe use of the internet. A Sunday afternoon cookery club helps young people learn baking skills and the preparation of traditional Sunday roast dinners. Young people respond well and develop skills for independence. Staff emphasise the importance of healthy living via the cookery club. Young people learn the value of preparing fresh fruit and vegetables. Young people are offered good access to local health resources such as dentists. Gym membership,	

the recent purchase of a boxing punch bag and sports such as football support the offer of regular exercise.

Formal life-story work is lacking. At present photos and mementos are not being stored for later use. This denies young people the opportunity of developing an understanding of their histories and obtaining a memento of their achievements.

Staff strive to celebrate culture and difference in the home. They escort young people to preferred places of worship and encourage them to incorporate cultural foods into the weekly menu.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The home is well maintained and all necessary risk assessments are completed. A programme of redecoration is presently being undertaken. Managers consistently review and evaluate potential hazards in the home in line with young people's risk assessments. This results in a safe and secure environment. Young people are well represented. Residents' meetings are conducted as 'teen talk' sessions and offer a weekly forum to discuss activities, weekly menus or other concerns. Young people are encouraged to read through monthly reports and reports on key-work sessions and offer their wishes and feelings. Independent advocacy is routinely offered. Recently this supported one young person to challenge a care planning decision from the local authority. Consequently, he remains in placement and is more settled. The home recently commissioned a mentor to continue her work with a young person at the conclusion of his statutory court order. This was his specific choice and allowed the continuous development of a positive piece of work which supports placement stability. Individual placement plans, behavioural plans, risk assessments and health plans are of good quality. They are based on observations from the professional network and rigorous case recording. Staff understand young people and their behavioural patterns and learn to intervene effectively when they are struggling. Recently when self-harm was suspected, staff acted quickly to remove all hazards from a bedroom and keep a young person safe. Behavioural management is consistent and effective. Staff focus on continually encouraging and rewarding good behaviour. When young people achieve, staff take clear and obvious pleasure. There is no use of restraint in the home. Police are contacted as the last resort; this avoids the unnecessary criminalisation of young people and allows staff to develop their de-escalation skills. Staff think about	

and reflect on presenting behaviours. Recently, they linked the fact that a young person was struggling to the anniversary of a significant event; support was increased and the placement stabilised.

Staff make good use of contracts to clearly explain expectations and offer a constructive alternative when young people struggle. Young people are consulted on their own behavioural management plans and preferred strategies for when they feel upset. This helps to reduce outbursts and empowers young people. Contact with birth parents and friends is prioritised. Staff are proactive in contacting placing authorities to complete risk assessments and arrange agreed overnight contact. This lessens anxieties for young people and keeps them safe.

Multi-agency work is strong. Staff recently liaised with the youth offending service to allow for a panel meeting to occur in the home. This supported the young person to attend in a more familiar and comfortable environment. Local police are frequent visitors to the home and work directly with young people to inform them of areas of risk within the local area. This helps promote safety and challenge the previously held stereotypes held by young people.

Young people reduce risk-taking behaviour with effective staff support. Staff challenge friends and associates if their influence is considered to be negative. This has helped to reduce incidents of missing behaviour. This supports young people to become more risk aware in the local community and settle in the home.

Staff engage creatively with specialist input from child and adolescent mental health professionals. Recently one young person struggled to engage with his therapist; staff worked with the therapist directly and implemented her recommendations to support the care of the young person.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The home benefits from a permanent, highly experienced management team. The registered manager has been in post since 1997, is a qualified social worker and holds a management certificate. He is supported well by a deputy manager who has been in post for two years and holds the level five management qualification. Managers have formed an excellent knowledge of the resources for young people in the local area. This is useful in offering a diverse range of experiences and options for young people in their care. Managers recognise that there are shortfalls and are focused on service improvements. They remain highly respected by the staff, who refer to them as 'offering excellent support and leading by example'. Managers remain ambitious and seek new means of improving the service. A new computer information system has been introduced to curb time spent on administration and allow staff to spend more time with young people. Case files illustrate the effective and consistent audits completed by managers. Placing professionals refer to 'thorough and good report writing'. Risk assessments continue to be reviewed regularly and offer clear guidance for staff regarding key trigger behaviours and coping mechanisms. Managers advocate strongly for young people. They push placing authorities for resources and monitoring meetings when required. In addition, they act quickly when placements become unsafe and a managed move needs to be expedited. This supports good levels of care for young people presenting with high levels of need. The home benefits from the effective and regular scrutiny of the independent visitor. She also facilitates the home's training package. This results in training being tailored to the specific needs of the home and supporting improved care practice more effectively. Staff morale is strong. It is a small and bonded permanent team, with no use of agency staff. Managers cover for periods of annual leave and preserve consistency and the 'family style' feel to the home. Staff understand the statement of purpose and remain invested in the development of the home. They communicate well among each other, offering critical challenge and ensuring behavioural management is consistent. The staff members are diverse in ethnicity and age and have a wide range of skills able to meet the needs of young people. They receive regular supervision and appraisal. A learning culture is evident in the home. Training is sourced online, via the local authority or from private providers. Despite this, one staff member did not complete the level three qualification within the required timescale. In addition, the	

home is still to implement a previous recommendation to seek the views of young people and professionals when conducting appraisals. This will result in a more holistic assessment of staff developmental needs and a better trained workforce.

Practice in the home is very child centred and focused on maintaining a family style environment. When difficulties occur in a placement, managers term the resulting meeting as 'a placement stability meeting'. This places the emphasis on young people working with staff on improving their behaviour and promoting a positive resolution.

Admissions are well handled. Managers scrutinise each referral and offer good matching to the needs of young people already resident in the home. Existing residents need to be considered 'ready' prior to any referral being considered. Careful thought is given to age and previous care history. Managers report good levels of support from senior managers within the organisation. This helps to improve outcomes for young people.

Recruitment activity is not safe. Managers failed to verify verbally one reference from a recent applicant. This did not offer a full assessment of previous employment history, potentially placing young people at risk.

At present, one staff member is providing care for two young people overnight, alone in the home. The home has not provided a suitable assessment of this risk and its impact on the care of young people in the event of an emergency.

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 children looked after 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 that 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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