

SC028460

Registered provider: Children's Home 1021588

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Event 10027119

Information about this children's home

This home is a family-owned business, which provides care and accommodation for up to four young people who have emotional and/or behaviour difficulties.

Inspection dates: 15 to 16 May 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: 17 January 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:

- Staff organise young people well and ensure that they are supported to attend routine health appointments and attend education.
- Young people build excellent relationships with the staff team and the leaders and managers.
- Consistent routines and boundaries help young people to feel safe and supported.
- The staff and managers work hard with young people to help them remain in the home and find stability there.
- The home has its own in-house counsellor, who is available for young people once a week.
- Care plans are individualised and staff consider young people's interests in order to engage them, for example, music therapy or gym membership.
- The home responds well when young people go missing from the home and negotiates well with the professional network to find solutions to reduce episodes of missing.
- Professionals and parents report that young people make good progress from their starting points and have been helped while living here.
- Staff manage transitions sensitively for young people and advocate on their behalf to ensure good planning.

The children's home's areas for development:

- All relevant health and safety certificates were not available to view during the course of the inspection. Other evidence suggests these are in place; however, the certificates are not present.
- The home has had an ongoing problem with mice infestation. A pest control agency has been regularly visiting and laying bait; however, the problem continues.
- There is a good record of individual staff training records on file, detailing training attended and copies of certificates issued. The records do not show copies of certificates of staff members' original qualifications, such as the level 3 diploma or the level 5 in leadership and management.
- The home does not give enough robust challenge to responsible local authorities to provide an opportunity for young people to have an independent return home interview.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/04/2016	Full	Good
11/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
22/07/2015	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that the home complies with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, certificates, infestations) in relation to copies of certificates for gas appliances, public liability, car insurance and seeking further opinion on pest control. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- Ensure that all staff in a care role, including external agency or bank staff, show original certificate evidence of the qualification in regulation 32(4). A copy of this should be placed on their personnel file. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.12)
- Ensure that, when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people enjoy positive relationships with the staff at this home. The staff team is established and consistent, which allows trusting relationships to develop. Staff and managers spoken to on inspection knew the young people well and talked fondly of them. The care they provide is having a positive impact on the progress young people make. For example, young people are offered incentives to attend health appointments and education, which result in greater participation. One young person says, 'I give credit to the staff, they have given me chances and I appreciate that, they give me the time.'

Staff and managers provide young people with a range of positive experiences, such as trips out to the cinema, local restaurants, or shopping. Every year, the young people are involved in planning and taking a holiday break, for example to stay at adventure and theme parks. Young people have the opportunity to be involved in more day-to-day activities, such as discussions about menus, weekly activity planning and how the home is decorated. Such discussions take place at a weekly young people's meeting, where young people can give their shopping list choices and be involved in wider discussions about the running of the home.

Young people have a key worker who provides regular key-work sessions. A strength of this home is how staff use every opportunity to engage with and teach young people life skills and positive choices. The trusting and established relationships allow staff to do this in a non-intrusive and natural way, as it would happen within a family setting. Key-work sessions are also used more formally with young people to discuss the more complex decisions in their lives, such as living in an independent setting, addressing cannabis use, or managing relationships. All young people set realistic goals/targets with their key workers for the next six months and regularly review progress. Young people are encouraged to attend their reviews and are supported by the attendance of their key worker or one of the managers. When young people do not agree with their care plans, managers challenge placing authorities and encourage young people to seek advocates to speak on their behalf.

Leaders and managers have undertaken some work on revising the complaints process in the home and simplified this process, following a recommendation made at the previous inspection in January 2017. There is now additional information including a flowchart of the complaint process in the home's statement of purpose and the children's guide/handbook. Staff remind young people during key-work sessions about their right to complain. Complaints seen during this inspection showed speedy responses, which resolved complaints quickly. For example, one young person told me that they complained about the shower and it was fixed within one working day. Managers have also sourced up-to-date advocacy details and updated the children's rights information within the literature provided by the home. One young person is currently using the services of the local youth intervention and support services to challenge a transition to semi-independent living accommodation.

All young people attend school, college or tuition. Where there are difficulties or concerns about attendance, the staff and managers at the home address these quickly to encourage participation. At times, young people have experienced emotional or health needs which have meant they have been less able to participate. Staff and managers have been proactive in promoting continued education, even if this has been on a reduced timetable or supporting other educational activities. Managers call meetings with schools/colleges to discuss any issues as they arise and find strategies to encourage continued attendance. The manager offers financial incentives to encourage young people to attend education. In the last academic year, one young person achieved seven GCSEs and three other young people passed functional skills exams at levels 2 and 3.

When young people do not engage in their placement plans, a good level of help and support is offered to try to promote change. The leaders and managers do not give up on young people easily. For example, even when young people are regularly missing, the case records show a good level of engagement in key work sessions and attempts to promote educational activity. Regular meetings are sought to preserve educational placements if needed. Mentors are commissioned to try to engage young people in apprenticeships. Specialist services, such as drug and alcohol services, and 'Safer London', are engaged from the community in order to support young people. The staff and managers hold regular placement stability meetings to agree strategies to try and engage young people. Where it is agreed a transition to an alternative resource is needed, young people are fully involved in these plans.

Young people are supported to be healthy and to take care of their health by engaging in preventative healthcare, for example routine dental and optician check-ups. When young people first arrive at the home, the manager ensures that clear medical information is sought from the placing authority, including GP details and whether routine checks are up to date. The home has an excellent working relationship with the children's looked after nurse and uses this relationship to ensure that early appointments are scheduled for young people when needed. Where more specialist services are required, the home supports referrals or appointments for young people. The manager has employed a counsellor who attends the home on a weekly basis and offers one-to-one sessions with young people, or wider consultations to staff on any emotional/behavioural issues arising. Where young people have not wanted to meet with the counsellor, referrals have been supported to the child and adolescent mental health team or another appropriate resource, such as drug and alcohol counselling and advice. The manager and staff have good working relationships with the wider support services in the local community and are able to use these to support young people when necessary.

If possible, prior to moving in, young people are given the opportunity to visit and meet staff and the other residents. Young people say they feel welcomed and safe in the home. They like their rooms and are given a young people's handbook, which is explained to them in detail by their key worker. All the young people know how to complain and several have an advocate or a mentor working with them. Staff begin life-story work with young people from the day they arrive at this home, recording significant events and completing information sheets with young people about their background history and past events. When young people move on, this work is presented to them as a record of their time in the home. This process helps young people to think about their history, and identity, and supports them to understand why they are looked after.

The staff team is experienced and works consistently well together to support young people to develop skills and strategies to manage their behaviour. Young people are helped to manage difficult feelings by staff, who model a calm approach to unwanted behaviours and reinforce negotiation and compromise with positive rewards and incentives for good behaviour.

Observations of everyday life in this home show that young people are treated with dignity and respect. Staff always knock on young people's doors and ask if they can enter their room. Staff speak to young people and their friends with courtesy and make requests politely, explaining reasons for their requests or actions. For example, staff requested that a young person's friend leave the unit when home tuition was due to take place.

Young people learn everyday life skills through consistent routines and clear boundaries. Expectations are clear and rewards and negative consequences are carefully balanced to help young people progress. Healthy options are encouraged to promote a healthy diet and young people are encouraged to join the local gym for exercise. The home employs a part-time cook, who prepares nutritious food for all the young people.

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

Staff and young people feel confident to report allegations or concerns in the home. Safeguarding issues are reported promptly to the appropriate agencies for investigations when they arise and young people are carefully supported during this process. The designated officer has considered no incidents since the last inspection, although staff spoken to were aware of the processes to report if necessary.

Young people say they feel safe and like living in this home. One young person says, 'I would prefer foster care to a home, but I think it's okay,' and another says, 'I like being here, it's near to my home.' All young people know how to complain and have a copy of the children's handbook. The handbook has up-to-date phone numbers for advocacy services and children's rights information. There have been a number of complaints from young people since the last inspection. Young people say they feel that issues they raise are taken seriously and responded to quickly. An independent person who visits the home on a monthly basis has oversight of all the complaints made by young people.

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, young people have six-monthly objectives/goals, which can include working on risky behaviours to improve health and safety. This helps young people to understand what adults are concerned about and allows them to take some responsibility for their own safety.

The home's response to young people who go missing is very good. There is clear guidance for staff, which includes expectations about the process and how to accurately record and report. Helpful guidance and reminders about how to report young people who are missing or absent from the home can be found in flow chart format at the front of the 'missing log'. Leaders and managers have prepared a breakdown of the patterns of young people who go missing, which helps them to understand and explain high levels. Despite some high levels of missing, this does not raise concerns as the response from the home and multi-agency working is good, as follows:

- Reporting and recording of missing episodes is consistent and clear.
- There is good evidence of working in partnership and strategies agreed with other agencies (police, youth offending service, education, parents and placing authorities) at placement stability meetings.
- Absence is broken down, explained, and agreements considered to prevent continuous reporting, such as when young people are with friends, family and long-term boyfriends/girlfriends.
- Individual agreed strategies for each young person are helping to reduce episodes of missing.
- Staff and managers are consistent in their efforts to keep in regular telephone contact, search the local area, and contact friends and relatives when young people's whereabouts are unknown.
- The police and placing authorities are advised when young people return, so that de-briefs take place and offers of interviews from an independent person can take

place.

- The home undertakes its own meetings with young people on their return to try to understand why they are going missing from the home.
- The home works in partnership with voluntary agencies, such as 'Intervention Youth Support Services,' for some return home interviews.

Understanding the patterns and working hard with young people has seen a fall in missing episodes. Although the home and the police provide de-briefs for young people when they return from missing, the percentage of young people offered an independent interview from their placing authority is poor. Despite making initial requests when young people return, the home has not robustly followed up this part of their missing strategy.

Notifications of significant incidents have increased in the past year. Some of these are updates on safeguarding incidents or missing from care episodes, but some have not been required and have pushed up numbers recorded. The home's response to incidents, allegations and safeguarding is good and there is no indication that young people are at any further risk due to this increase.

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.

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. The manager identified some minor shortfalls in respect of the health and safety checks. There are no certificates on file for annual gas checks, public liability insurance, or staff members' car insurance. Some of these issues were resolved during the inspection. Staff members' car insurance certificates are now on file and the other missing certificates have been requested from the respective agencies. No young people have been placed at risk because of this shortfall. In addition, the home has had a continual problem with mice infestation on the ground floor, specifically in the kitchen area. Despite continued pest control, this issue is not resolved and requires further consideration as to how to deal with the problem.

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

Adequate precautions are in place to 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: good

This home is a privately owned and family-run business. The manager is experienced and holds a level 5 diploma in leadership and management. An experienced deputy manager supports the day-to-day running of the home. She holds a national vocational

qualification, level 4 in caring for children and young people. The two managers have worked together as a team for many years and have established an effective service for young people. An established staff team strives to offer good services for the young people it cares for. The staff say they feel supported by leaders and managers and have support for continued learning and professional development.

All staff either hold level 3 qualifications or are currently on courses. Despite this, the staff personnel files do not have copies of original certificates, indicating that the manager may not have seen these. The records of staff training are otherwise extremely well organised and show an excellent variation in training which meets the needs of the young people in placement. A staff-training matrix is in place for the coming year's training events and indicates that staff have the opportunity to complete refresher child protection, risk of radicalisation, risks of child sexual exploitation, and physical intervention training.

Staff say that they feel supported and that training is appropriate to equip them to do their jobs effectively. One worker said, 'There are regular staff and handover meetings which help staff to keep in touch with what is happening in between shifts.' Staff also talked about receiving regular monthly supervisions and yearly appraisals on their progress and development. Staff spoken to felt that they worked well together as a team, as it was always the same people working at the home. One worker said, 'Staff are good at helping out and covering shifts, it makes a big difference to young people.'

Staff reflect the diversity of the local community and many have worked at the home long term. Where young people have differing needs in relation to religious beliefs, culture, dietary, disability, gender or language, staff ensure that arrangements are made to support them. One parent felt that certain meat should not be available at the home at all; however, the home takes the view that all backgrounds and needs should be catered for and young people's right to choose should be respected. Specific dietary requirements, such as halal meat or vegetarian options, are catered for, but the menu is not exclusive to any culture or religion. Regular 'World day' events are arranged to encourage young people's knowledge of the differences in culture, diet, religion and language.

An independent visitor regularly monitors what goes on in the home and reports directly to Ofsted every month. These reports have helped the leaders and managers improve the home considerably, for example in breaking down the detail of when young people go missing from care, so that this can be understood better. These reports also take into account the views of the young people living at the home, professionals using the service and, sometimes, parents. These views help the home to take into account the views of others and understand the strengths and areas for development.

Leaders and managers show that they can act on recommendations to improve practice. All feedback is used to improve and develop the home. The registered manager's quality of care review is comprehensive and feeds into an annual development plan. The leaders and managers continue to seek to improve services for young people.

Leaders and managers work closely with the staff team and they are integral to the running of the home. Young people know the leaders and managers well and feel they can approach them. Leaders and managers know the young people and their care plans

well and always attend review meetings to support staff and young people. If they are concerned about the progress young people are making, they call early meetings to discuss these issues and find strategies to manage difficult behaviours and stabilise placements.

Leaders and managers ensure that all key documents and policies receive regular updates to remain compliant with regulations. For example, the home's statement and purpose of function was updated in January 2017 to ensure that all staff qualifications and changes were included.

The home maintains an excellent record of working in partnership with other agencies. There are established local and community networks with placing authorities, youth offending services, the children's nurse, the local community/neighbourhood police team and missing from care voluntary agencies. All these networks support and assist young people to stay safe and to enhance care planning. For example, the home makes direct contact with independent agencies who offer return home interviews and networks with the nurse to organise direct appointments for young people.

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 who 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: SC028460

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address:

Responsible individual: Ms Monica Thompson

Registered manager: Valerie Campbell

Inspector

Christine Kennet, social care inspector

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