

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	11/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC028599
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Children and Family Services Limited
Registered provider address	Prospero House, 46-48 Rothesay Road, Luton LU1 1QZ

Responsible individual	Ruth Kirchner
Registered manager	Ruth Kirchner
Inspector	Jane Partridge

Inspection date	11/08/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved 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

SC028599

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Children experience a welcoming, comfortable home, where a stable and consistent staff team offers nurturing, familiar care.
- The staff team builds trusting and sustaining relationships with children. The staff genuinely care about children's welfare and work in their best interests.
- Managers and staff work particularly closely with the wider professional team to deliver consistent, individualised care to children.
- The use of individualised targets demonstrates progress. Achievements are recognised and celebrated.
- Some children are demonstrating self-awareness, recognising their own thoughts and feelings and how these may affect the wider group.
- Children access a full range of home and community activities, offering fun and social inclusion.
- The diverse staff team supports children to have their cultural and religious needs met and celebrated.
- Parents and professionals speak highly of the service and the nurturing care that the children receive.
- The inspection also identified some shortfalls in the manager's quality of care review, qualifications for one staff member, the locality risk assessment, the work-force development plan and the sharing of information in risk assessments with staff. The home generally presents in good order, but some planned refurbishment has not been completed.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the registered persons 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 persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification by the relevant date. The individual must attain the level 3 diploma for residential childcare (England) ('the level 3 diploma') or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the level 3 diploma. The relevant date is, in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1 April 2014, the date which falls two years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home, or, in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1 April 2014, 1 April 2016. (Regulation 32(4)(a)(b)(5)(a)(b))	22/09/2016
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ('a quality of care review') at least every six months. In order to complete a quality of care review, the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care provided for children and must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45(1)(2)(a)(5))	11/02/2017
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year, taking in to account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). (Regulation 46(1))	22/09/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that the home provides a homely, domestic environment, with specific regard to meeting its ongoing refurbishment and decoration plan. ('Guide to the

children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

- Ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and arrangements in place to protect them, with particular regard to ensuring that risk assessments undertaken are available to all staff. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- Ensure that the registered person has a workforce development plan and that the plan is updated to reflect current regulations and standards. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home offers care and accommodation to up to seven children in two adjacent houses. Children placed here have additional needs, including a learning disability and/or a physical disability. A private company owns and operates this provision.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
03/12/2015	Full	Requires improvement
19/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/02/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Children experience a stable home environment with care delivered by a committed and nurturing staff group. Children placed have a range of additional needs. Staff take time to establish rapport through a variety of communication methods to secure trusting and dependable relationships. When discussing the relationship between children and staff, one parent commented: 'He loves them. He gets on well with them.' Another said: 'They know her well. They understand her and what she wants.' Children settle well. They develop relationships and attain a sense of permanence. One parent commented: 'The home is very family orientated and they make a family unit.' A social worker added: 'This is her home. When she talks to me about home, it's here, this home.' Children make progress living at this home. Staff set individual targets for each child to aid their personal, social and independence skills. Children experience a sense of achievement when they meet their targets, as staff award and display certificates in recognition of the children's accomplishments. The skilled staff group devises a range of visual aids to help children to manage and understand routines or to help them to make choices in life. They also work very closely with the school. This establishes consistency of approach and offers children a familiar and safe environment. A school representative said: 'Sometimes we create resources together, whether these are visual timetables or social stories.' In addition, daily-completed communication books give each party up-to-date information on the child's well-being. When asked to comment on what progress a child had made since living in the home, a social worker said: 'Well, everything!' The social worker went on to describe a host of developmental areas from improved concentration to expanding her network of 'safe people' and the development of relationships. Staff meet children's physical and mental health needs. They use specific strategies to help children to manage their behaviour. One child has particular difficulties about food. Being involved in food preparation and a timetable of daily activities have aided his acceptance and engagement. Close, dependable, safe relationships have enabled a child to recognise his own angry feelings and behaviour and the impact these may present to others. He chose not to engage in an activity, as he knew he had the potential to cause damage. Some children are beginning to self-regulate as they establish greater insight into their own emotional states. Managers and staff work with a range of health professionals. They work alongside mental health services to ensure that the emotional well-being of children and good mental health prevail. Similarly, they refer children to specialist resources, as necessary, such as speech and language therapy to aid verbal communication.	

Staff regularly update care plans to reflect current care packages. When appropriate, staff share these with children. The child is able to reflect on past plans and events and to note the progress they have made over time. Care packages also note personal care, ensuring that each child receives dignified, respectful care. Key-work sessions offer children an opportunity to discuss their day-to-day experience of living in the home and things that they may want to change. One child, writing about his biggest achievements, wrote, 'to be good and happy', and that he would like 'a power ranger room'.

Children have fun in this home. Recent purchases of outdoor games, equipment and trampolines offer them a range of fun garden activities. They also access a significant range of community activities, including specially adapted play equipment. Children experience annual holidays. Staff record these along with the multiple fun events in individual memory books, noting and capturing moments of childhood. The diverse staff team helps to deliver family-orientated care. Staff promote and celebrate the individual cultural needs of children as a shared experience.

A particular strength of this home is the close working relationship it has with each child's family. Staff recognise the importance of family relationships and work with parents and siblings to maintain family ties. Staff create a daily log, which offers parents a tool to communicate with their children on contact. One parent commented: 'They have created a communications book. I get to read this. It tells me what he has been up to, and I can use this to make conversation with him.' Parents speak highly of their working relationship with staff and the care that their children receive. One parent said: 'I see her progressing. What they have done is brilliant!'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Children living in this home are safe. Each is cared for on a one-to-one basis during the day, and waking night staff ensure staff's availability 24 hours a day. Changes to the home's security arrangements have ensured that a previous experience of a child missing has not reoccurred. The staff undertake missing-from-care risk assessments, which identify the level of possibility and set out the safeguarding strategies alongside. Staff work in line with the local police protocols, which hold essential information about each child, and identify their significant vulnerabilities. Risks of missing are well understood and minimised by the	

strategies in place.

The stable staff team offers both consistency and familiarity to the children. Most children placed have very limited verbal skills. Therefore, staff use a range of communication models to build trusting and safe relationships with them. This is a significant contributor to staff managing behaviour. One parent commented: 'She is following rules and sticking to boundaries. She is happy, safe and more settled.' The staff do not use any physical intervention to manage behaviour, preferring instead to use distraction or pictorial communication. Staff manage children's behaviour well. Routines and boundaries offer a safe, predictable home environment, and particularly good relationships between children and staff mean that physical intervention is not required.

The manager recognises the need for deprivation of liberty assessments for some children. She is proactively working with the local authority to ensure that these are in place as required.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The manager has wide-ranging experience and knowledge within children's social care. She is appropriately qualified and has held the manager's post since the home opened in 2000. This inspection highlighted a number of management shortfalls, and requirements and recommendations have been set accordingly. The manager's quality of care review does not specifically consider the opinions of children, parents, placing authorities or staff. It also lacks content and analysis of the information that it does report. This does not enable the manager to consider fully the strengths of the home or the areas for continued development. While most staff are compliant with either having or working towards the required diploma to work within a residential childcare setting, one member of staff is significantly outside this requirement. There are no plans in place for the staff member to undertake the qualification. This leaves the member of staff without the required knowledge to practise in the setting. The current locality risk assessment is out of date. The assessment is based on outdated information and does not include recent anti-social behaviour in the community. This requires updating to ensure that all factors are considered in the	

safeguarding of children.

The home has a workforce development plan. However, this includes outdated information referring to past learning requirements. New staff, therefore, are not equipped with the correct information in respect of the learning requirements.

The manager has implemented a number of monitoring tools to ensure that staff receive up-to-date information on each child placed. However, the management of the system has failed to incorporate all the new information. This leads to a lack of staff awareness of all changes and the new behaviour management required to effectively care for children in line with their relevant plans. The final recommendation is in respect of the two houses. While both homes offer a comfortable, stylish standard of living, delay in the planned works for a kitchen and bathroom refurbishment and redecoration in the home is compromising the usual high standard of presentation.

The manager has established a stable and committed staff team that is skilled in understanding and meeting the needs of the children placed. New recruits undergo a robust recruitment and vetting process, to ensure the recruitment of the most suitable candidates onto the team. An induction programme offers them immediate understanding of the home's primary operations, and a programme of mandatory training aids their continued understanding and knowledge of meeting the needs of the children. All new recruits are enrolled onto the required diploma to work in a residential setting. The home offers continued learning and professional development through a range of disability and childcare training courses. This ensures that staff deliver competent, quality care to children.

Staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. These offer space to discuss children's individual needs and staff's professional development. This is a key factor in meeting the needs of the children, ensuring effective staff performance and delivering a service as set out in the home's statement of purpose.

A particular strength of this service is the close working relationship with parents and the wider professional agencies. Staff proactively seek to establish rapport in a bid to form a good working relationship. A parent of a child recently placed commented: 'They are very open and willing to learn from me.' This demonstrates how staff regard and value parents' knowledge and understanding of their own child and use this to better inform the delivery of care. A social worker said: 'I work very closely with staff. Staff and I supervise family contact.' This close working relationship ensures that staff have first-hand experience of how the child encounters contact and the possible impact that this may have on behaviour and mood.

The last inspection set two recommendations. The first was to ensure that the home only accepts placements for children when they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. Since that time, the home has not had any new children placed. The second recommendation was for the home to recognise and celebrate the achievements of children. This is

fully met.

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 whom 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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