

SC028868

Registered provider: Step-a-Side Company Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a small, private company that is based locally, which also operates another children's home in the area. The company also provides domiciliary care services for young people and homes for adults who have disabilities, which are separately regulated and inspected by the Care Quality Commission.

The home currently provides care and accommodation for a maximum of four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 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 requires improvement to be 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: 26 October 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The staff have helped young people to dramatically decrease their risk-taking behaviours, especially in the use of drugs and going missing from home.
- Young people have developed or are developing a good understanding of their behaviours and the negative impact these may have on themselves and others.
- Staff have built open, strong and trusting relationships with the young people. Young people acknowledge all the help and support staff are giving them.
- Young people are engaging in education through home tutors. This is significant progress as they have been out of education for a considerable time.
- Young people benefit from taking part in an excellent range of activities, which enable them to maintain their current hobbies as well as try new experiences. These activities are community-based and help young people develop their sense of self-worth, self-confidence and self-esteem.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The registered manager's monitoring is not consistent. This reduces the effectiveness of the monitoring in driving forward improvements.
- Safeguarding information is recorded in a number of different places. This does not allow for safeguarding work to be tracked or audited effectively.
- Staff supervision records do not consistently record the discussions that took place or actions that have been agreed. This does not help staff develop their practice.
- Window restrictors in two of the young people's bedrooms are of an institutional style, and some damaged furniture needs to be repaired. This detracts from the rest of the home, which is homely and welcoming.
- There has only been one incident of a young person going missing from care but the return interview was not carried out by a person independent of the home or company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/10/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
26/04/2016	Full	Good
11/11/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
02/06/2015	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 The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— (2)(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (2)(h))	30/09/2017
Policies for the protection of children The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect. The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular, provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response. In addition, these records should be gathered in one place to allow effective tracking and auditing of actions. (Regulation 34 (1)(a)(2)(d))	31/08/2017

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. In particular, breakages to furniture should be quickly repaired. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 3.9, page 15)
- 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', paragraph 9.30, page 45)

- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). In particular, these records should be of a consistently good standard and reflect not only the discussion but any subsequent actions to be taken. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 13.3, page 61)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The overall quality of care and the progress young people make from when they arrive at the home is good. Young people benefit from being cared for by a stable, experienced, well-trained staff team that they have built strong, effective relationships with based on mutual respect and trust. The staff team has an in-depth knowledge of the young people they care for, and are committed to providing them with the care and support they need to thrive and reach their potential. Parents, social workers, independent reviewing officers and the young people said the staff are 'brilliant', 'fantastic', and 'couldn't do any more' for the young people in their care.

Young people are able to take part in an extensive range of activities which are not only fun but help them to develop their self-esteem, self-confidence, social skills and social networks. Young people said that they are always asked what they would like to do, and if possible staff then organise this for them. As well as enabling young people to maintain their hobbies, staff encourage young people to try new things. With the support of staff, both young people are planning their summer holidays, which include individual holidays abroad.

The admission procedure has recently been reviewed, as a result of events last year when the home did not secure all the information it should have before young people moved in. Ultimately, this led to young people living together who did not get on and some of them had to leave. The new procedure incorporates the lessons learned from this to ensure that the situation is not repeated.

Both young people have been receiving 25 hours of home tuition each week. There has been a delay in securing a school place for one young person but the registered manager has strongly advocated on the young person's behalf and a school has now been found. Another young person has just completed their GCSEs and is hoping to do a music course at college. Both these young people had a considerable history of not engaging in education prior to living at the home.

Young people's healthcare needs are well met. Arrangements for the storage and administration of medication are safe. Young people have individual weekly sessions with a psychologist, which they feel have been very beneficial. One spoke of now being able to recognise and understand their 'negative and dark thoughts' and how to move on from them.

Staff help young people to maintain contact with their family and friends, who are made to feel welcome at the home.

Young people are supported in developing their independence skills at a level appropriate to their age and abilities.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The staff team demonstrates a good working knowledge of safeguarding policies and procedures, and their duty of care. They place young people's well-being and safety at the centre of their practice. Although it is possible to evidence that all safeguarding matters have been appropriately referred and followed up, information regarding safeguarding incidents is recorded in several different places. This inhibits the tracking, monitoring and evaluation of this work.

Young people said that they feel safe at the home. They said that they have great relationships with the staff who care for them and would go to any of the staff if they had any worries or concerns. Young people said that they feel listened to and involved in all aspects of their care.

Since living at the home, young people have dramatically reduced their risk-taking behaviours. Young people said the staff have helped them understand these behaviours and the impact these have on them and those around them. They said that through this work they have developed skills and strategies to keep themselves safe. One young person said that it was not until they came to the home that they realised how their drug use was making them feel paranoid.

Each young person has a bespoke behaviour support plan which is developed by the staff with the psychologist. These plans are kept under review and amended in light of incidents, events and young people's progress. The main focus of behaviour management is trust, respect, positive reward and de-escalation. There have been no incidents of restraint since the last inspection.

Sanctions are used appropriately. The registered manager has carried out a review of the sanctions used, which has led to sanctions becoming more restorative.

Since the last inspection there has only been one episode of a young person going missing, which was during a visit to their family. Staff followed the protocol designed specifically for this young person and they were returned to the home. The return home interview was carried out by the responsible individual of the home. This should have been done by somebody independent of the service.

Risk assessments are comprehensive. They clearly identify the risks and strategies to control and/or reduce the risk, and are kept under review to ensure that they reflect the current situation. This approach is used for young people's individual risk assessments and those for activities or health and safety.

Procedures for the selection and vetting of staff are in line with safer recruitment practices and protect young people from those who may wish to harm them.

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

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers require improvement because the registered manager does not monitor practice efficiently. Consequently, shortfalls are not always clearly identified and addressed.

Staff receive regular supervision but the quality of the records of these sessions is varied. Some do not reflect the discussions held or actions set to improve staff practice. Staff regularly meet as a team and these meetings involve input from a psychologist. This provides staff with an opportunity to discuss and review young people's plans and progress.

The home is managed by an experienced registered manager who is appropriately qualified. Since the last inspection, both requirements have been met. Young people are engaging well with the home tutor and making good progress. One young person has a new school placement and is currently having introductory visits. The other young person is currently awaiting their exam results with a view to going to college. The staff team has built good and effective relationships with the young people. This had led to a reduction in restraints and young people going missing from care. Young people's understanding of their behaviours and development of self-management strategies have increased.

The provision of training for staff is good. All except one member of staff have the National Vocational Qualification 3/Diploma 3 or above. The remaining member of staff is enrolled on this course. The training schedule is kept under review to ensure that the training staff receive meets the young people's needs and develops the staff team's skill base.

The home provides the young people with a comfortable and homely environment in which to live and thrive. The exceptions to this are 'institutional' style window restrictors on young people's bedroom windows and a small number of pieces of furniture which are in need of repair.

Young people's records demonstrate the progress they have made since living at the home. However, the quality of these records does vary. Some lack detail of the work the staff team undertakes with the young people. There are a number of different places staff have to record similar information, which has led to duplication and in some cases a reduction in quality.

Consultation with young people, their families, social workers and others is a strength of the home. Information from this is used to review and develop practice. Feedback gathered during the inspection from parents and social workers was very positive. They praised staff for their commitment to the young people, their communication skills and the progress young people have made.

The home has a clear and effective complaints procedure which is followed in practice. Complaints records are comprehensive and record if the complainant is happy or not with the outcome. Information from complaints is reviewed and forms part of the home's development plan.

Leaders and the manager of the home challenge placing authorities effectively when they feel that young people are not receiving the support or input that they need.

An independent visitor comes to the home once a month. A new independent visitor has

been appointed as senior managers had noted that the reports of these visits did not help the development of the service as they should.

The home's statement of purpose reflects current practices at the home. The young person's guide is informative, colourful and age-appropriate.

The staff team ensures that the relevant authorities are notified of any significant events in a timely manner.

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 differences 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: SC028868

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Step-a-Side Company Limited

Registered provider address: Step A Side, 29 Market Place, COLEFORD,
Gloucestershire, GL16 8AA

Responsible individual: Rachel Carwardine

Registered manager: Lynne Brooks

Inspector(s)

Wendy Anderson, social care inspector

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