

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC036240
Inspector	Rosemary Chapman
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Derby City Council
Registered person address	Treasurers Department Council House, Corporation Street DERBY DE1 2FE
Responsible individual	Rodney Leopold Jones
Registered manager	Patricia Irene Topliss
Date of last inspection	31/03/2014

Inspection date	15/10/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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This is a good home where young people make good progress as a result of the outstanding level of care and support provided by the staff and management team. Particular strengths include the home's ethos and success in relation to education, a positive approach to behaviour management and good transition planning and support for independence. There are exceptionally effective and supportive relationships between staff and young people. Staff clearly demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the young people they care for and a commitment and passion to provide the best possible support to enable them to be the best they can be. A stakeholder commented in relation to a young person at the home, 'the staff have done a really good job.'

The safety and well-being of young people are prioritised and staff have a robust understanding of all aspects of safeguarding. Young people clearly state that they feel safe and that staff manage risky situations well. Positive relationships with the police and other stakeholders underpin the safeguarding practices to ensure effective multidisciplinary working.

The home is well managed by an experienced Registered Manager who is ably supported by an equally experienced deputy manager. They in turn provide good support to the stable staff team to enable them to care for the young people

effectively and well. Communication is good and staff contribute their views to develop the home for the benefit of young people. Similarly, young people are consulted and their views also form an important part of the home's development. Monitoring arrangements, both internal and external, are effective and lead to improved practice and better outcomes. The development plan is clearly and realistically linked to improving outcomes for young people and demonstrates good managerial insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the home.

Areas for improvement identified as a result of this inspection relate to: the recording of sanctions; ensuring the home maintains a record of recruitment checks for all staff and ensuring that the whole staff team have updated safeguarding training. These shortfalls do not have an impact on either the outstanding quality of care or the good progress young people make but are made to further support the good practice.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a local authority and provides medium to long-term care for up to six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is a flat to enable young people to acquire independence skills.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/03/2014	Interim	good progress
14/01/2014	Full	good
09/01/2013	Interim	good progress
08/08/2012	Full	good

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17 (2001)	ensure the written record for the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline includes all the detail required by this regulation. (Regulation 17B(3)(a)-(i))	28/11/2014

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the home has a record of the recruitment and vetting checks

which have been carried out on those working for the children's home (NMS 16.3)

- ensure that there is a good quality learning and development programme which staff are supported to undertake. This is with specific reference to ensuring that all staff have up-to-date training in safeguarding and that the training records provide an accurate reflection of the training undertaken. (NMS 18.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

The young people living in this home are making good, and in some cases exceptional, progress in all areas of their lives. Young people recognise how well they have done and what they have achieved, which supports the development of a positive self-view, improved confidence and better self-esteem. For example, one young person commented on significant changes in confidence, emotional well-being and independence skills, saying, 'I am doing really well and have made lots of progress.'

Young people develop good and trusting relationships with staff, which help them share their worries and respond to the support and advice on offer. For some, this may be the first time they have had a consistently positive response from adults in their lives.

Young people are healthy and have a good awareness of how to promote their own good health. They show a good understanding of healthy eating, have good contact with a variety of health professionals and access to plenty of advice on all aspects of physical and emotional well-being.

Young people are making good, and in some cases exceptional, progress at school or college. They all have an educational placement and their attendance is excellent, particularly when comparing this to previous placements. One young person's attendance is 95.6% and is on target to achieve above the expected levels. Young people who previously had sporadic attendance at school completed their GCSEs and are now in college. One parent, recognising the difference between then and now commented: 'My child is really coming on. I am so proud.'

Young people have good involvement in the home. They have regular meetings where they air their views and are consulted on many aspects of their care. They feel their views are listened to and acted upon if possible. For example, they each in turn choose the menu for the week, they choose their summer trips and their more regular activities and they are fully a part of their care planning and incentive scheme. This results in young people who feel valued. Young people also access a variety of community activities such as cheerleading, tumbling, the cinema, golf and roller skating. This improves their skills, their confidence and supports the development of friendships outside of the home.

All the young people have appropriate and positive contact with the people who are important to them and, for some, this contact has improved because of the progress they have made in the home. This enables them to have a better understanding of their backgrounds and improves relationships with their family.

Some young people have engaged in risk-taking and anti-social behaviour while living at this home. However, there has been a very recent improvement in this, which is positive and beneficial.

Young people develop good independence skills to enable them to make a successful transition to independent living. This is a strength of the home, as it includes not only practical skills but also emotional resilience and understanding about healthy relationships. All young people, whatever their age, make good progress and at an appropriate level and pace in this regard.

Quality of care

outstanding

The consistent care and support which staff in this home provide are of an exceptional standard and clearly link to the positive outcomes which young people experience. Staff know the young people really well and speak in detail and with passion and enthusiasm about the progress they have made and how they are supported. One social worker commented, 'I can't praise them highly enough.' This sentiment was echoed by a parent who said: 'The staff are fantastic. They are very patient, they have a lot of time for my child and give plenty of opportunities.'

Staff and young people have very positive relationships based on mutual respect. Young people are very aware that staff want the very best for them, and this is evident in the way they interact and speak to each other. Staff are constantly thinking of innovative ways to support the young people and improve their life chances. For example, one member of staff is undertaking an arts award so that young people can get accreditation for a variety of arts-related activities. Staff are strong advocates for the young people and will tenaciously pursue their entitlements on their behalf. A stakeholder commented: 'It is a fantastic placement; the care and support are excellent.'

Young people feel that their views are valued and that they are listened to. They have regular opportunities to influence both their own care and the running of the home through key working sessions, young people's meetings and reviews of their plans. A young person said: 'If staff can do it, they will.' One young person was involved in an interview panel for a senior member of staff in the local authority and young people have also been involved in making a DVD for other young people, to explain what it is like coming in to care. These opportunities to make a difference and have an influence in a number of significant areas ensure that young people improve their sense of self-worth and confidence.

Young people are very clear about how to make a complaint and a small number have done so. These have been appropriately resolved to the young person's satisfaction and used to improve practice. Advocacy is also regularly used to support young people in ensuing they can talk to someone independent of the home. The advocacy service representative was very complimentary about the staff's response

to advocacy and their knowledge and understanding of this role.

The staff at the home work extremely effectively in partnership with social workers to ensure the young person is cared for in line with the local authority's plan. The home's own plan is detailed, addresses all aspects of a young person's needs including their identity and is regularly reviewed so that staff know how to support a young person consistently and appropriately. The young person's involvement in their own care plans is very clearly documented. This ensures that they will be more likely to engage with the support on offer as they have been part of the decision making. The home contributes very well to the young person's statutory review by providing good quality and timely reports and being fully aware of the young person's needs and current situation.

The staff have access to a wide range of external services to support young people, including those who misuse drugs and alcohol. They work extremely effectively in partnership with the children in care nurse, the education staff, the police and the youth offending service to ensure that young people receive a comprehensive service which meets their needs. The support for education is exceptional. The home's ethos fully supports young people's attendance at school and college and there is a very clear expectation that young people are gainfully engaged in education or employment. Staff will provide transport, help with homework, engage with the personal education planning meetings and provide as many opportunities and support as are necessary. They never give up on young people.

Young people engage in a number of different activities, both as a group and individually. They are currently planning how to celebrate both Diwali and Halloween and have purchased decorations with staff support. They enjoy living in this home and are particularly appreciative of the very good, freshly prepared food which is available and which they choose. The cook is committed to providing a nurturing environment and bakes birthday cakes to reflect young people's personalities and interests as well as helping them learn to cook, in conjunction with the staff.

The home is located in a residential area. It is being rebuilt in the very near future to provide a better environment for the young people. However, although the exterior of the current building is somewhat institutional in appearance, the interior is very homely and welcoming, clean and well maintained. The walls are decorated with photographs of young people's activities, holidays and achievements which promote a sense of belonging.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people feel safe and are safe in this home. There is no bullying and staff are committed to placing the safety and well-being of young people at the centre of their practice. Comprehensive and up-to-date risk assessments which are regularly reviewed further support staff practice and ensure that any risks are minimised and

staff adopt a consistent approach. Staff demonstrate a robust understanding of the procedures to follow and the action to take in a variety of situations when the safety of young people may be compromised. This includes threats from members of the community as a result of anti-social behaviour.

Staff are clear about the actions to take should a young person make an allegation and these have been implemented appropriately to protect young people. However, although staff are confident and knowledgeable in this area, not all staff have had recent training in child protection to underpin their practice.

When young people are missing from the home or have unauthorised absences, staff are clear about the procedures to follow. This has been an area of improved practice as a result of a suggestion made by the independent person who conducts the monthly visits in accordance with Regulation 33. Not only has this made the staff response more proactive and thus improved the protective factors for young people, it shows that the manager and staff team are keen to learn and develop their practice. Although there have been a number of unauthorised absences since the last inspection, this has recently improved. There are very good relationships with the local police, which support both the home and the young people in minimising their risk-taking behaviour.

Staff are very aware of the risks posed by child sexual exploitation (CSE), and how this links with children who are missing from care. The home's CSE champion has undertaken training and passed this knowledge and other resources on to the staff team to improve their knowledge base and protect young people. Staff identify risks and vulnerabilities and take preventative action by working with young people on their self-esteem and body image, for example, and referring them to appropriate external agencies for further information and guidance before it becomes an issue.

A strength of this home is its management of behaviour, which results in very few sanctions and the very rare use of physical intervention. Positive behaviour is effectively promoted through the use of a well-embedded incentive scheme in which all young people participate. This promotes young people's progress as well as positive behaviour. Restraint has not been used since January 2013 and the small number of sanctions used have been appropriate. However, the recording of these does not fully meet the regulatory requirements as the staff member is not signing the book, nor are the time and location of the sanction noted. Because of the infrequent use of sanctions, the impact of this shortfall is limited.

Staff are robustly recruited and, in all but one case, the home could demonstrate this from the records kept on site. This ensures that the people who work in the home are safe and suitable. Similarly, the environment promotes the safety of young people as all the required health and safety checks are carried out at appropriate intervals. This has been strengthened since the last inspection by a more systematic and robust approach to health and safety monitoring through the use of an audit tool.

Leadership and management

good

The home has a Registered Manager who has been in post for over three years. She is appropriately qualified, with a national vocational qualification at level 4 in care and management, and is currently undertaking a level 5 diploma. She has extensive experience in residential childcare and provides effective leadership, in conjunction with an experienced deputy manager.

The home has a good relationship with the community and, despite recent difficulties which had an impact on the community, there have been no neighbourhood complaints. The home handled this situation well and tensions have been appropriately defused by the actions taken to resolve the difficulties. The home also works very well with partner agencies, all of whom are very positive about the staff and comment on good communication, stability and consistency.

One recommendation was raised at the previous inspection which has been fully addressed, resulting in an improved environment for the young people. Other areas of development since the last inspection have been mentioned elsewhere in this report, clearly indicating that the manager wants to develop and improve practice for the benefit of young people and learns from external monitoring, concerns and complaints.

The home has a recently updated statement of purpose. This is an accurate reflection of the home and the services and facilities it provides. Young people are provided with information about the home from the comprehensive children's guide so they know what to expect and how to complain and access other avenues of support.

Monitoring, both internal and external, is effective and clearly takes the views of young people into account. The development plan is child-focused, realistic and drives improvement. Weaknesses are being addressed and although strengths are acknowledged, there is no sense of complacency.

The home has a full complement of staff, with new staff being successfully integrated into the well-established staff team. The staff are child-focused, caring and fully committed to the young people and demonstrate this through the support they provide. Staff are qualified, experienced and competent in their roles. They are enabled in this through regular, good quality supervision which allows them to reflect on their practice and annual appraisal of their performance which links into their training needs. They have access to training and are up to date with mandatory courses; however, the training record does not accurately reflect some of the other training they have undertaken, such as input at team meetings or briefings from external partners, all of which play an important part in maintaining their up-to-date knowledge and competence.

Record keeping is generally good. Children's files are well organised, up to date and provide a good account of their time at the home should they choose to access their file in the future.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.